

Old Brahmanical **Shrines of Thailand**

Satya Vrat Shastri



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VIJAYA BOOKS

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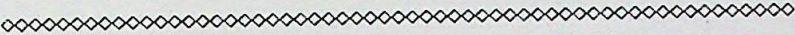
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PREFACE

It was on 7th October, 1977 that I reached Bangkok, Thailand to take up my first assignment at its Chulalongkorn University as Visiting Professor of Indian Studies. This provided me with an opportunity to discover that country with which India has age-old ties. It was in that context that I came to know about its old Brahmanical shrines. I wanted to see them for myself to have a feel of them and to acquaint myself with them intimately. I decided to visit each of them. I took it as a pilgrimage. This involved its own risks. A number of shrines were located far from habitable areas, deep in the countryside, approachable many a time by crossing waterways with tree trunks serving as bridges posing great risk to a newcomer like myself not used to walk over them, their being round in shape. To the locals they would not pose much of a problem but to a foreigner like me they did. During my travels I carried usually three things, a camera to take the photographs of the shrines and the scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, the Purāṇas and Brahmanical mythology sculpted on them, a diary to take notes and some foreign exchange to meet my living expenses. The risk in crossing the waterways was not limited to the loss of all the three should there be a slip but of physical hurt which could be disastrous. I braved all these risks and continued with my travels. These travels yielded rich dividends. I came to possess a big haul of photographs in the form of slides—the digital cameras were not in vogue at that time. I took one precaution. I noted on the slides themselves the name of the shrine and the scene/s depicted on it/them as far as I could divine it/them. All

these slides I kept secure in a box specially designed for the purpose. The box had a number of shelves to accommodate them. So did I keep the diary with copious notes.

Years rolled by. I got busy with some work or the other. The material collected with great effort remained unutilized till the realization dawned on me with advancing years that if it were not brought into the public domain there is every possibility of its getting lost which meant not only the loss of the effort but also the knowledge that could be shared with others who could be interested in it. The notes I elaborated into detailed descriptions. These are being published herewith with relevant photographs which I selected from my archives. Since these were kept secure they had not suffered in quality even with the passage of several decades. Even my shifting from my old house to the new one did cause no harm to them of which, to tell the truth, I was very apprehensive.

Though I am not an expert in handling the camera, the slides, I am happy to note, have come out fairly good.

My researches on Thailand, particularly on the subject matter of the present work, the Brahmanical shrines and on the subject matter of the Sanskrit Inscriptions that formed a sizable volume published some three years back that brought me face to face with the great contribution of the Indians of yore in weaving into the Thai matrix much of their own cultural ethos. They were harbingers of the interactive approach in mutual relations. I cannot but recall here an incident in this connection. My travels brought me one day to a place in the direction of the provincial town of Nakhon Ratchasima (Sanskrit form *Nagararājasimā*) which has in it a cottage called *Kuṭi Ṛṣi* (pronounced locally as *Ku Rasi*, *ṛi* is omitted), the cottage of a sage (the present work has description and photographs of it). Standing before it I first bowed to the unknown *ṛṣi* who had left his homeland in days gone by to an unknown land which he made his home going so far in it that that it is not easily approachable even in these days of better communication links. Through him I also paid homage to many

other ṛṣis whose figures dot the boundary pillars as well as the shrines throughout the Thai kingdom. The ṛṣis whose photographs the present work carries are easily identifiable with their long beard, matted hair and rosary. They are generally depicted in cross-legged posture. It is these ṛṣis and men of knowledge who would have led to the wafting of the fragrance of Indian culture across to Thailand.

Thailand is a country that has rich fare for a researcher from the point of view of its India connections. I am happy I had the opportunity to explore much of it during more than one assignment in it. I have written extensively on it. My critical works like *Studies in Sanskrit and Indian Culture in Thailand* and *Sanskrit Inscriptions of Thailand* and the creative works, like the *Thaideśavilāsam*, a Khaṇḍakāvya on places of historical and cultural interest in Thailand and the twenty-five canto Mahākāvya, *Śrīrāmakīrtimahākāvya* on the Thai Ramakien plus a thesaurus titled *Sanskrit-based Words in Languages of Southeast Asia* which has a sizable Thai component prepared under my General Editorship bespeak my interest in the country I am deeply in love with.

In my own humble way I have been trying all my life to bring the two great countries, India and Thailand, closer to each other. The present work, the latest one in similar attempts, is also directed towards that end.

Satya Vrat Shastri

New Delhi

21 August, 2018

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Prasad Hin Panom Rung

One of the most important Brahmanical shrines of Thailand, the Prasad Hin Panom Rung, the stone (Hin = stone) Temple (Prasad=temple) on the Panom Rung hill—the hill by which it has come to be called has a lot to offer to a visitor. With its majestic grandeur and its beautiful stone carvings it cannot but attract his attention. From the point of art history it should belong to the Lopburi period. Situated in the District of Nangrong in the Burriam Province it is accessible by a well metalled road. It has two buildings, one completely in ruins in the lower part and the other in a good condition, particularly after the restoration in the upper part.

Building in the Lower Part

The front of this building faces the east. Four terraces of steps with each step measuring 22 metres lead up to it. Beyond the basement for installing an image which is on both sides of the steps, is a quadrangular space. To the north of it is an elephant enclosure. Built of sandstone and laterite it faces the south. A building there has two porches, one in the east and the other in the west, each 6.4 metres wide and 22.4 metres long. In the front of the porch is a terrace. There are galleries on three sides. The passage within the gallery is 4.35 metres wide. There are three staircases on three sides. The building might also have been a sanctuary, judging from the motif carved on the stone block and on the pillar. It can help us in determining its date. A carving

depicts here a Kīrtimukha with hands emitting two Nāgas with five hoods the back of each of which has hollows unconnected with each other. Behind the hollow is an ornament. If this motif were to be compared with the Khmer art, it will be found to be identical with the art of Klang style (Circa 950-1000 A.D.). Again pieces of a stone pillar found in its vicinity show that it (the building) was reconstructed later. The pillar is quadrangular. On it are the bead-like or lotus-petal-like motifs. But the most important motif is on top of it. It is of the shape of a flower with four petals. This is very similar to the Bapuan style of Circa 1150-1200 A.D. From this one can infer that the eastern corner of the building was reconstructed about the 12th Cen. A.D. About 50 metres to the west of this building there lie three ponds which are used till today.

Building in the Upper Part of the Main Building

It is on the top of a hill. Below that on the plain ground is a road paved with sandstone which is 7 metres wide and 16 metres long. Along both sides of the road there are quadrangular pillars with the unblown lotus shape at the top put into a row. Beyond this road there is a Nāga bridge made into a cross. It is 5.2 metres wide and 20 metres long with three steps. The rail of the bridge is made in the shape of a five-hooded Nāga whose top is beautifully carved. So is the support of the bridge. The hollow of the Nāga is made into one piece. The rim of it (the hollow) is a little indented continuously. From this it can be said that the bridge might have been built in the beginning of the Angkor period which is contemporaneous with Prasad Bung Mala in Cambodia. Beyond the bridge are the stone-steps, 13 metres wide and 30 metres long with five terraces. These steps lead to an open space outside the main building, the sanctuary. On both sides of the steps there are four quadrangular bases.

The main building has two Prangs (=towers) made of brick which have been recently discovered, through excavation. Situated in the northeastern corner well within the galleries, they are quadrangular in shape facing the east and the south respectively. There might have been a third Prang also which might have stood

on the opposite side of the one facing the south. It might have faced the north. Possibility it is that it might have been removed before the construction of the big Prang, if we consider the motif on the frame of the door which is still visible near the Prang facing the last, which is contemporary of the Khmer art of the Bakheng period because the motif in the shape of the leaves is of big size while the pillar is octogonal. On each side there is only one full leaf and two half leaves. There is also a ring shape motif at the corner of each side. The Prangs could have belonged to the 15th cen. A.D. because of the two figures in the main Prang. The figures are of two goddesses, their heads and hands broken. The garment that they are shown to wear is plated with the front part folded into a curve. This is very similar to the Khmer art of the Konkair period, i.e. 900-950 A.D.

The second goddess can be identified as Brāhmī, i.e. the female Brahṃā. It is carved out of yellow sandstone. The goddess has four heads and is shown sitting with folded hands with right knee raised. The lower garment is similar to the one described above. The figure should, therefore, belong to the 10th cen. A.D.

A Small Prang in the Southwest within the gallery

This is quadrangular with indented corner. Each side is 6 metres wide. The outer part of the building is made of sandstone. The inner part is made of laterite. Considering the motif on the lintel and the gable this Prang should have been built in the 11th cen. A.D. because there is a hint of Khmer art of Klang period (950-1100 A.D.), e.g., on the lintel in the front is a Kīrtimukha extending its tongue which is of rectangular shape. It is emitting garlands which its hands hold. Above it (the Kīrtimukha) is a deity sitting one knee raised within a frame. Below the garlands are motifs in the shape of leaves, both upside down and upside up. Each part of the lintel is divided by a hanging garland which in itself is divided into parts according to the parts of lintel. This is characteristic of Klang style. The Nāga at the lower end of the gable above the lintel is similar to the Bapuan style, i.e. the

Kirtimukha which emits the Nāgas has disappeared while the Nāgas are without decoration on the head.

Lintel in the South

The lintel in the south has the same characteristics, i.e. it is similar to the Khmer art of Klang period combined with Bapuan style.

Main Prang

It is rectangular and the entrance is from the east. There are porches in all its four directions. The Prang has a number of interesting stone carvings. The gable on the porch in the eastern side has a massive figure of Naṭarāja. In the northern side a lintel has scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it depicts in the upper part the abduction of Sītā, in the lower part towards the right hand side the killing of Mārica in the form of deer and in the left hand side something which is not very clear. What is noticeable in the last is the figure of a man with a bow in shooting posture. Also shown in it are a pillar and most probably a bird with the front part broken. The first impression the carving gives is that of the depiction of the scene of the lifting of the bow by Rāma at the time of Sītā Svayaṃvara but the presence of the bird would militate against it. It could be the scene of Arjuna's shooting a target at the Draupadī Svayaṃvara. But then the induction of a scene from the *Mahābhārata* in the midst of the scenes all from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, would militate against the natural rule of symmetry. The question would, therefore, have to be left open till some further evidence comes into light.

On the southern side of the Prang at the top is again carved the scene of the abduction of Sītā. Below is shown the scene of the return of Rāma to Ayodhyā as can be guessed from the musicians preceding him. Rāma is shown on horse back, and is shown followed by some people. On one side of this carving at some distance is depicted a fighting scene.

On the back side porch gable are depicted three scenes, one of the bringing of Indrajit's head to Mandodari in palace, the other of

the tying of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in Nāgapāśā, the serpentine rope, from the arrow of Rāvaṇa and the third, the weeping monkeys—all one below the other. Inside the sanctuary, at the back of the porch from the back side is depicted the scene of a figure, head broken tearing a person into two. For a time it had been thought that the carving represented the scene of Narasiṃha Viṣṇu in his incarnation of Man-lion tearing the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu but closer scrutiny has led to the view that it represents instead the scene of Kṛṣṇa tearing Kamsa apart. Similar carvings have been discovered from Cambodia where the figure tearing a person unmistakably is that of Kṛṣṇa.

First room from back side and the room in the northern side have a panel each at the top which depict the scene of five Ṛṣis, seers, sitting cross-legged, knees raised and hands folded in a posture of prayer. The panel in the room in the southern side is slightly different from the panel in the room just behind the porch in that the Ṛṣi in the middle holds a rosary in his hand, that his figure is a little bigger than those of the two Ṛṣis each flanked on either side of him and that it is in a frame. The carving may have been according to the Sanskrit Inscription found at Panom Rung long back. That Inscription mentions King Sūryavarman II, the builder of Angkorwat. It also says that one Hiraṇya built a golden statue in dedication to his father named Narendrāditya who was a Yogī meditating in a cave. This Hiraṇya might have been the person who made the Inscription and built the main Prang in dedication to his father. The Ṛṣi in the middle holding the rosary might suggest Īśvara or Narendrāditya. The Prasad Panom Rung appears in all probability to have been a Śaiva sanctuary because the Sanskrit inscription referred to above, which was found there starts with the salutation to Īśvara, Śiva, though the carving on the lintel on the other part of the Prang depicts the incarnation of Nārāyaṇa. This is not important because to judge whether the sanctuary is of the Śaivas or of the Vaiṣṇavas entirely depends on the inner lintel; e.g. in the Prasad Hin Pimai, a carving in the innermost lintel depicts a scene from Mahāyāna Buddhism while a carving on the lintel of the outer part depicts a story of the

Rāmāyaṇa. As for the gallery encircling this Prang it might have been built in the same period. There are gates from four directions. The front gate is to the east. One can mark the gallery on the east, south and west of sandstone and in the north of laterite. Many of the sculptures of the late Bapuan period style have been found in the Prasad, the important ones being: the guardians of the quarters, each of them of bas relief on only one face sandstone, the other three sides are empty (i.e. stone is carved only on one side, the other three sides have no carving). Till now only six guardians of the quarters have been found. It is for the first time that one finds such deities in Lopburi period carved in separate stones. It is unfortunate that it was not possible to find the original place of these deities. It has to be conjectured. The deities might have been placed on the pillar in the open air towards the direction they guard and the oblation might have been put on the blooming lotuses carved on the pillar on which they stand. Those pillars, however, have not been found. It is possible that they (the pillars) were made of wood. They may have decayed in course of time. These deities are as follows:

- (i) **Indra on Elephant:** *Indra, the guardian of the eastern quarter on the elephant.* He wears Uṣṇīṣa, Mukuṭa a necklace and an armlet and holds Vajra. The necklace is decorated with a small garland. This shows the turning point between the late Bapuan and Angkor 17th cen., styles. One can, therefore, put forward the conjecture that this statue belongs to the late Bapuan period. Here the Airāvata has only one head like an ordinary elephant. Its earlobe and tail are indistinctly carved. It wears a necklace and a bell. It is shown using its trunk to drag something which looks like a lotus stalk. The whole figure is within a frame. It has been found in the southeastern side of the main Prang.
- (ii) **Agni on Rhinoceros:** *Agni, the guardian of the southeastern quarter on rhinoceros.* Agni on the rhinoceros is typically Khmer. Later it also became

typically Thai. The Indian one is on a goat. His dress is similar to that of Indra, he may hold a banner in his hand. The rhinoceros may wear a necklace and a bell. Agni's statue has been found in the southeastern corner of the main Prang.

- (iii) **Varuṇa on Five-Headed Nāga:** *Varuṇa, the guardian of the western quarter on five-hooded Nāga.* Generally Varuṇa rides an Hamsa but as the god of rain he rides a Nāga (the giver of rain). His dress is similar to that of Indra and Agni, only he wears a pair of anklets additionally showing thereby that it belongs to the late Bapuan style. The hollow of the Nāga is connected into one piece. This is characteristic of the beginning of the Angkor Wat period. Varuṇa is shown in the Rājāḷilā position, i.e. the right leg raised and the left one placed horizontally. His weapon, the Pāśa, noose, has broken away. Varuṇa's statue has been found in the southwestern direction of the main Prang.
- (iv) **Kubera on Elephant-Lion:** *Kubera, the guardian of the northern quarter on lion or elephant-lion (gajasimha).* Generally Kubera rides a Yakṣa. In some figures, however, he is shown on a lion. In the figure in this shrine, however, his vehicle is elephant-lion, *gajasimha*, a typical creation of southeast Asia. He also is shown with a club in hand which is not to be found in his figure in the shrine raising some doubt as to whether it could be Kubera at all. Any way, it may be taken to be Kubera till its identity is established with some other god. The dress and the sitting posture of the figure are the same as that of Varuṇa. The lion is highly influenced by the Chinese Makara, e.g. the beard and the nose are long like the trunk of an elephant. The legs are more like those of birds or those of Garuḍa than of a quadruped. The figure is holding something in hand which could be a noose of snake, *Sarpaṇāśa*. The figure is found in the western side

of the main Prang.

- (v) **Īśāna on Bull:** *Īśāna*, the guardian of the western quarter on the bull. *Īśāna* is an *amśa*, part of Śiva. He holds, therefore, *Trīśūla* in his hand and rides a bull. He sits in the *Lalitāsana* position, i.e. the right leg hanging down and the left one placed horizontally. The dress is the same as that of the gods described above. *Īśāna*'s statue is found near the corner on the northwestern side of the main Prang.
- (vi) **Brahmā on three Haṁsas:** *Brahmā*, the guardian of the upper direction on three *haṁsas*, is shown in a statue in the *Mahārājājalilā* position. He has two hands. In one hand he holds lotus. At a glance we may think that he is *Varuṇa*, as *Varuṇa* also rides on a *Haṁsa* but the four faces show that he is *Brahmā*. Statue of *Brahmā* is found near the northern gate at the gallery. The number of guardians at this sanctuary, therefore, should be ten and not eight. According to Indian tradition and Khmer iconography there should be one god as a guardian of the lower direction.
- (vii) **The remaining guardians of quarters:** The remaining guardians of quarters are *Skanda* and *Yama*, *Skanda* on the peacock, the guardian of the southern quarter in place of *Yama* who is the guardian of the lower direction.
- (viii) **Nirṛti**, the guardian of the southwestern quarter on *Rākṣasa*. *Vāyu*, the guardian of the northwestern quarter on *mṛga* deer.

As for the lotuses carved on top of the stone, they are of the same type, i.e. the whole blooming lotus is visible, the pollen is seen in round shape in the middle encircled by eight big petals with eight small petals intermittently. Each lotus is encircled by a bead-like motif. At the four corners there are motifs of flowers indistinctly carved. These flowers are framed by bead-like motif. The oblation might have been placed on top of the lotuses. Apart from the statues of the guardians of quarters the statues of the vehicles, such as bull, elephant, buffalo, rhinoceros and swan

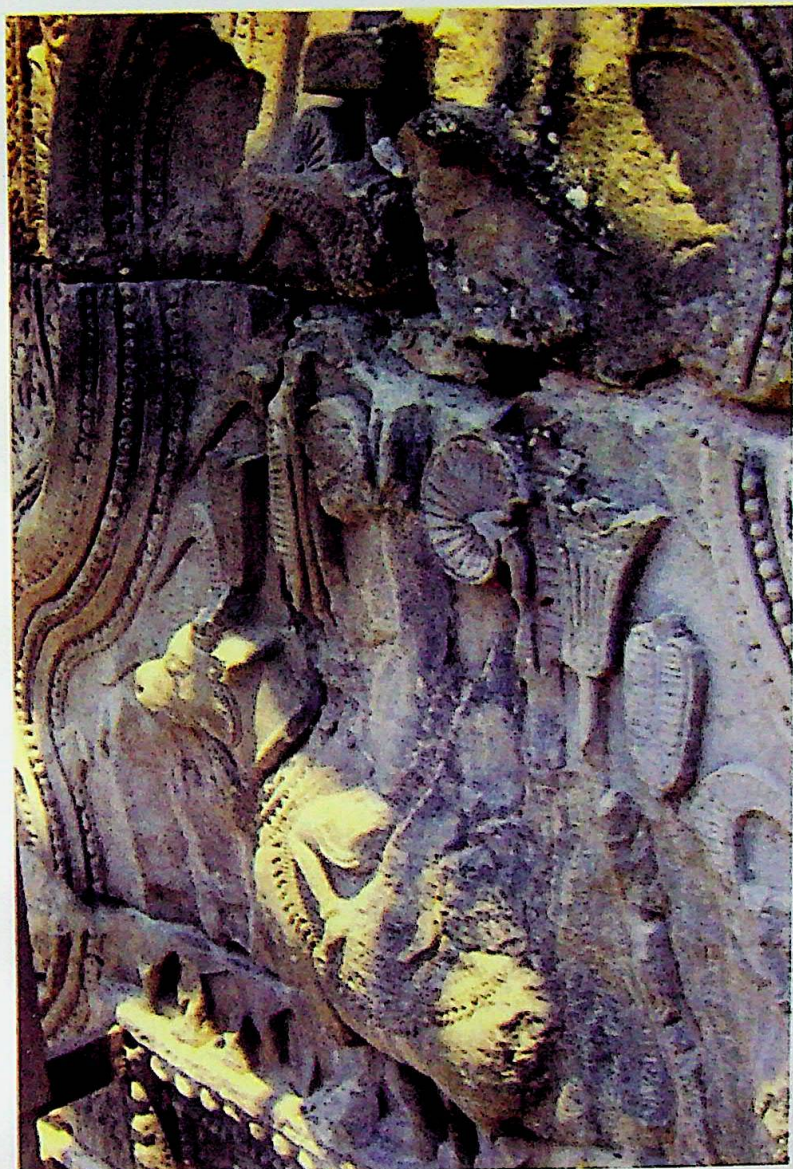
have also been found. The deities of the vehicles are made of bronze and have long got separated from them. Only the bronze latch remains. The vehicles are found within and outside the main Prang. It is, therefore, difficult to say as to where their original places were. Apart from these vehicles the statues of Dvārapālas, the guardians of the doors, have also been found. These belong to the late Bapuan period on account of the reason given above. The main Prang and the gallery around it together with these statues might have been built in the early 12th cen. A.D. which is the turning point between Bapuan and Angkor.

The temple quadrangle has two Vihāras. One of these at the northeastern corner is 450 metres wide and 8.80 metres long. It faces the south. Another at the southeastern corner is 9.5 metres wide and 7.6 metres long. It faces the west. These two Vihāras are made of laterite. They must have been built in the reign of King Jayavarman VII, the last great king of Khmer empire in Bayon period. The support of the dating is provided by the statues of two goddesses found in the eastern porch of the main Prang. These statues must have been placed on the same base for, a rectangular one has been found with two holes in it for the statues. There is a water passage in front of it. The two goddesses clearly belong to the Bayon period. Their identity is difficult to establish for the things that they might have held in their hands have broken away.

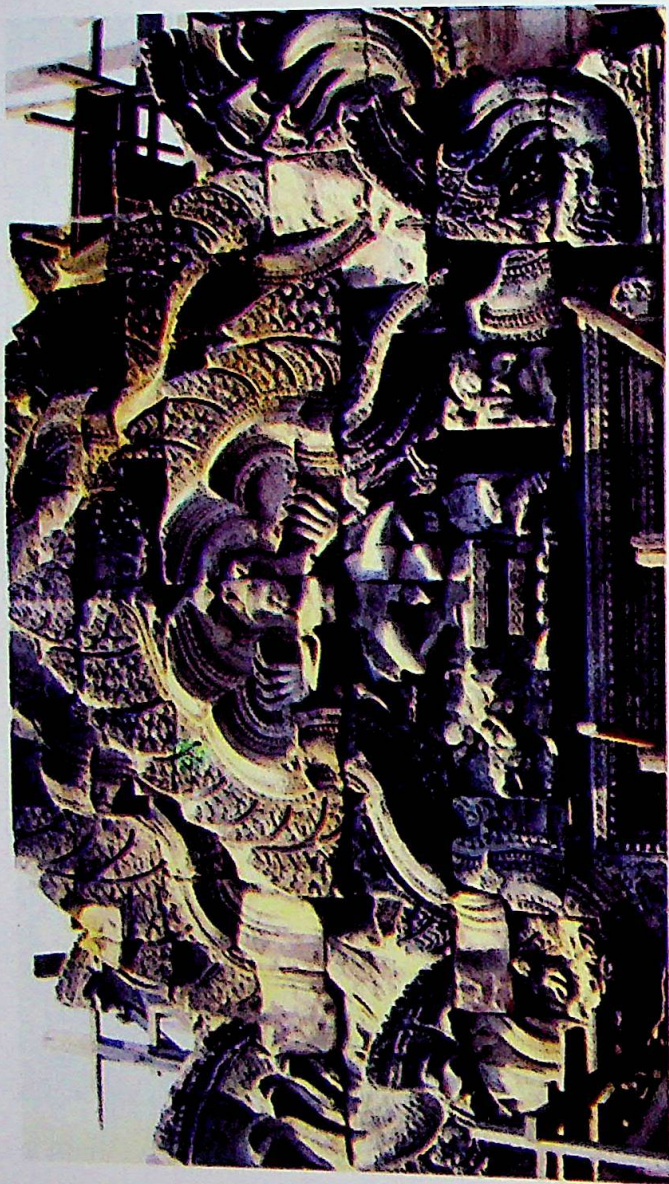
The above description and discussion would lead us to the conclusion that the Prasad Panom Rung had begun to be built in the 9th cen. A.D. and the additions were made to it from time to time till a very late period. This shows that the Prasad is a very important sanctuary. This was due probably to the fact that it is situated on the important route from Angkor Wat in the Khmer empire to the region around Prasad Muangtam which might have been densely populated judging from the big pond which is found even to this day.



Prasad Hin Panom Rung – A general View of the main prang



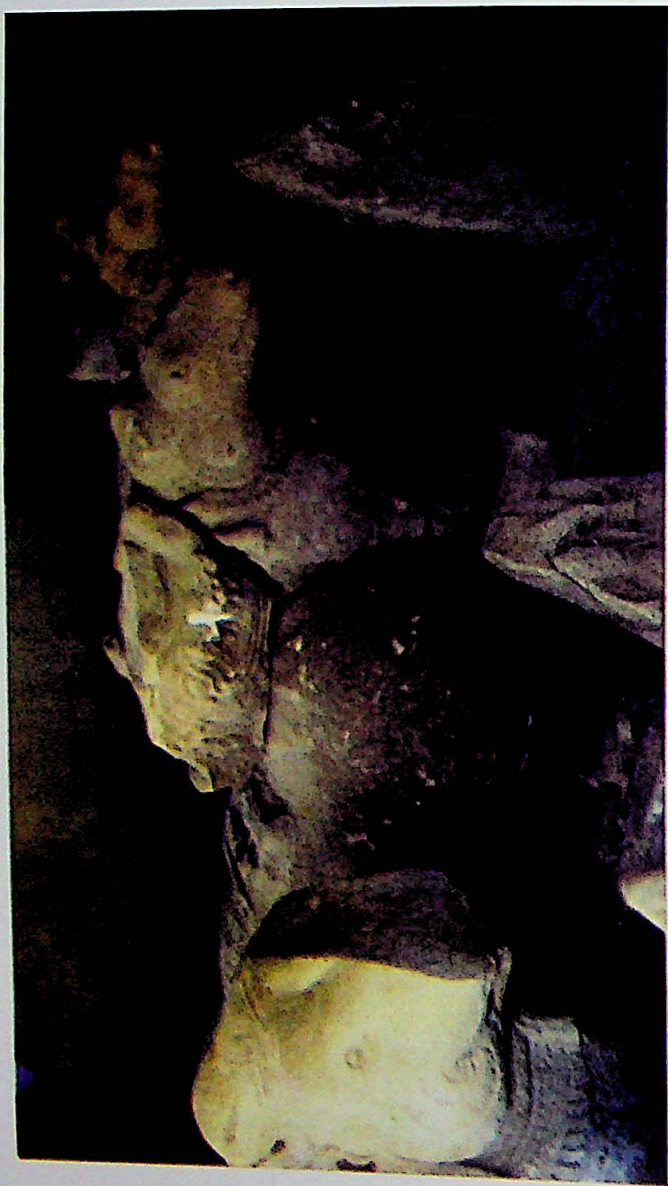
*Prasad Hin Panom Rung – Southern gable of the eastern prang.
Śiva on Nandī*



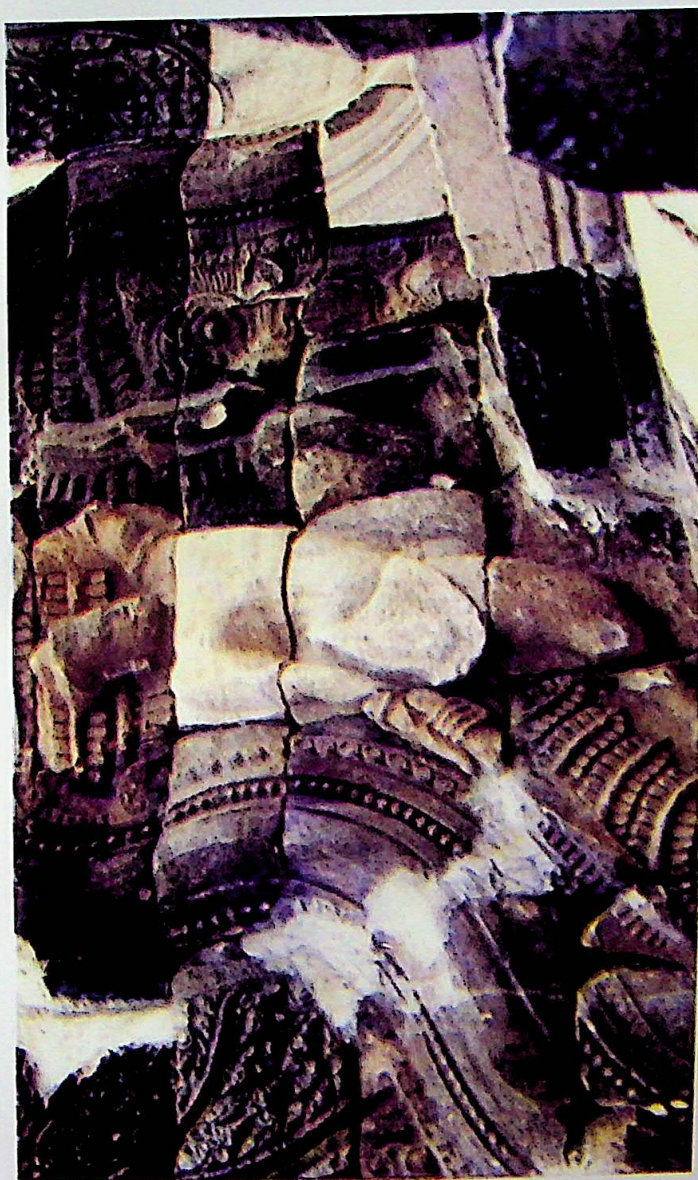
*Prasad Hin Panom Rung – Eastern Gable of the Eastern Porch
Figure of Natarāja*



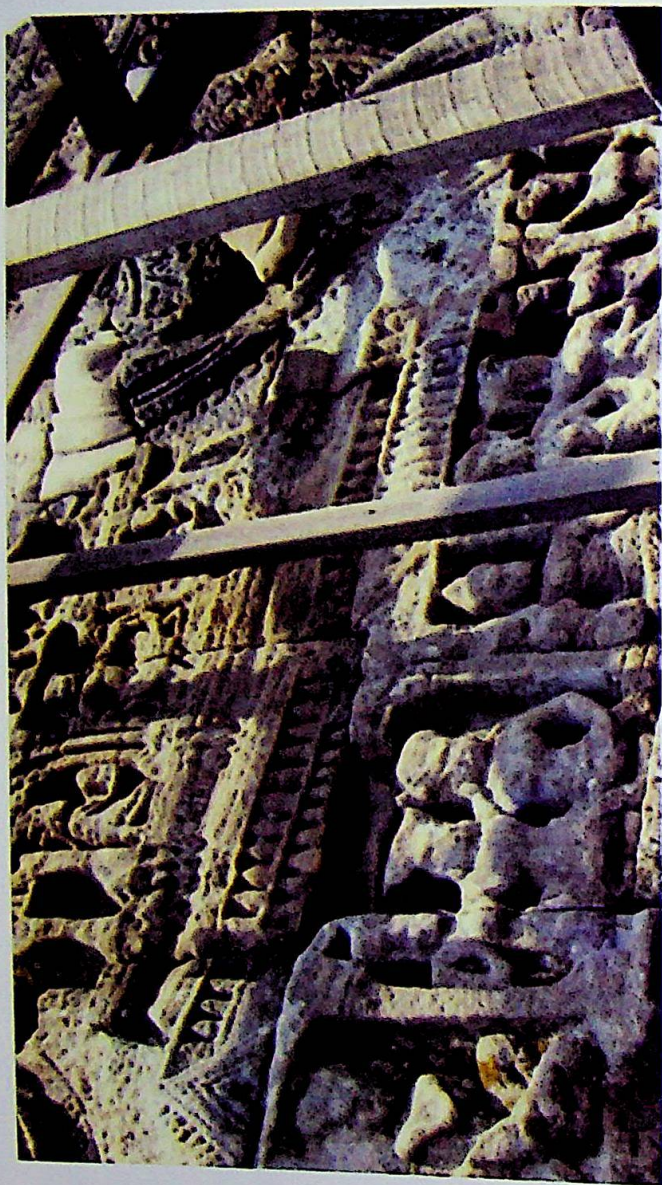
Prasad Hin Panom Rung – Part of Nāga Bridge



Prasad Hin Panom Rung – The Vehicles of Dikpālas



Prasad Hin Panom Rung – Northern gable of the main prang



*Prasad Hin Panom Rung – Western gable of the prang.
Ladies in palace*



*Prasad Hin Panom Rung – Eastern upper gable.
A lady under a tree*

Prasad Hin Pimai

It is found at a place called Pimai in the district of Nakhon Ratchasima in the northeast of Thailand. It was built by the Khmer King Sūryavarman in the 11th cen. A.D. It is surrounded by a stone wall with four gates. Inside the wall is a big courtyard with a pond at each corner. From the courtyard one comes to the galleries with four gates. The galleries lead to an inner courtyard which has three Prangs and one edifice. The Prangs are Prang Phrommathat which is a redented square tower with three stone statues, one of King Phrommathat, the other of Prince Pachit and still another of Nang Oraphia. The second Prang is Prang Hin Daeng which when excavated by the Fine Arts Department in 1951 had yielded the figure of Kāla on a bird. Behind this Prang is a small edifice, 17 × 6.50 m., where during the excavation some small Liṅgas were found and which are presently with the temporary museum at Wat Derm, not far from the Pimai shrine giving the edifice the name "Hindu Shrine". The third Prang is the main Prang made of both laterite and sandstone. It has four doors with the lintel above each carved with scenes from Mahāyāna Buddhism. Some additions were made to the Prasad by King Jayavarman in the 13th cen. A.D. Situated in the city centre, the shrine had been a place of worship for the Hindus and Buddhists for centuries. A number of scenes are sculpted on its stones. A stone on its eastern wall has two scenes. The lower one depicts Lakṣmaṇa killing Śūrpaṇakhā and the upper one Malivaggabrahmā adjudicating between Rāma and Rāvaṇa on the latter's complaint against the former that the former had invaded his country and therefore deserved punishment which he had found, as per the Thai *Ramakien*, untrue after listening to the complainant, the defendant as also to Sītā. To the east of it on the entrance to the sanctum sanctorum are shown on the upper portion on a stone Śiva on Nandi and the lower one Brahmā, Indra and Viṣṇu on the vehicles, Hamsa, Airāvata and Garuḍa respectively. The vehicles are in human form. Their heads are missing. To the north a stone has three levels each of which depicts a scene from the Rāmāyaṇa. The lowest one has a figure of Viṣṇu. To the south

a stone has four levels. The topmost one of its shows a monkey and a Yakṣa (there is something below it too but that is pretty indistinct), the one below it depicts the scene of the fight between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. The third level also has the same scene. The fourth level, the lowest one, shows the building of a pathway to Laṅkā. On the entry point from the south is depicted the scene of the lifting of the mount Govardhana by Kṛṣṇa. To the west in a frame is sculpted the figure of Kṛṣṇa. Below that on the same stone is depicted the scene of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in Nāgapāśa (the serpent-noose) and Garuḍa helping them. Still below that is the scene of the monkeys in prayer (probably because of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa being in the serpent-noose). In the inner portion of the shrine is shown the Buddha to the south who has one side of him a row of men and the other side of him of that of women. Every one of them carries in hand a pot which in all liklihood has in it an offering meant for him. In the same direction the upper portion shows him (Buddha) delivering sermon while the lower one a festivity. In the northern side is the figure of the Buddha with three heads and six hands in a posture of meditation to both sides of which are small figures of dancers, male and female. Out in the open lie a whole lot of stones some of which have a scene or two on them. According to popular tradition stones were brought from far off places. The sculptors worked on them. They joined them together to form a temple. The stones in excess of the requirement were left out in the open. It is these stones which continue to lie there. They are as old as those set in the temple and are equally important from archaeological and iconographical points of view. As of them as have some scene or the other carved on them some of the more noteworthy are the one which has the figures, now indistinct, of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and the monkeys or the one which shows Śiva on his mount Nandi along with Pārvatī or the one which depicts Viṣṇu and Garuḍa and the fight of Kṛṣṇa with Gajasimha (a southeast Asian innovation, an animal which has face of a lion and the lower portion of that of an elephant). The same stone which shows the scene of the above fight shows

Kṛṣṇa in the lower portion riding a Kīrtimukha (a kind of demon who figures quite often in Southeast Asian iconography). Kṛṣṇa is in angry mood with brows knitted and the eyes bulging—a rare artistic feat indeed.

The Prasad has ponds all around in the Nāgabandha style with each corner having a figure in stone of a Nāga with hood raised, its tail extending to considerable distance forming the boundary of them (the ponds) thereby. A gallery runs round the Prasad. Thanks to the interest of the Govt. of Thailand, a museum has also come up in Pimai which houses among other exhibits such interesting pieces as golden statues, silverware and jewellery which were discovered at the time of the renovation of the shrine. It has some fine idols also.



Prasad Hin Pimai – View from the front



Prasad Hin Pimai – Top of the main prang



Prasad Hin Pimai – Main Prang - View from the Northwestern corner



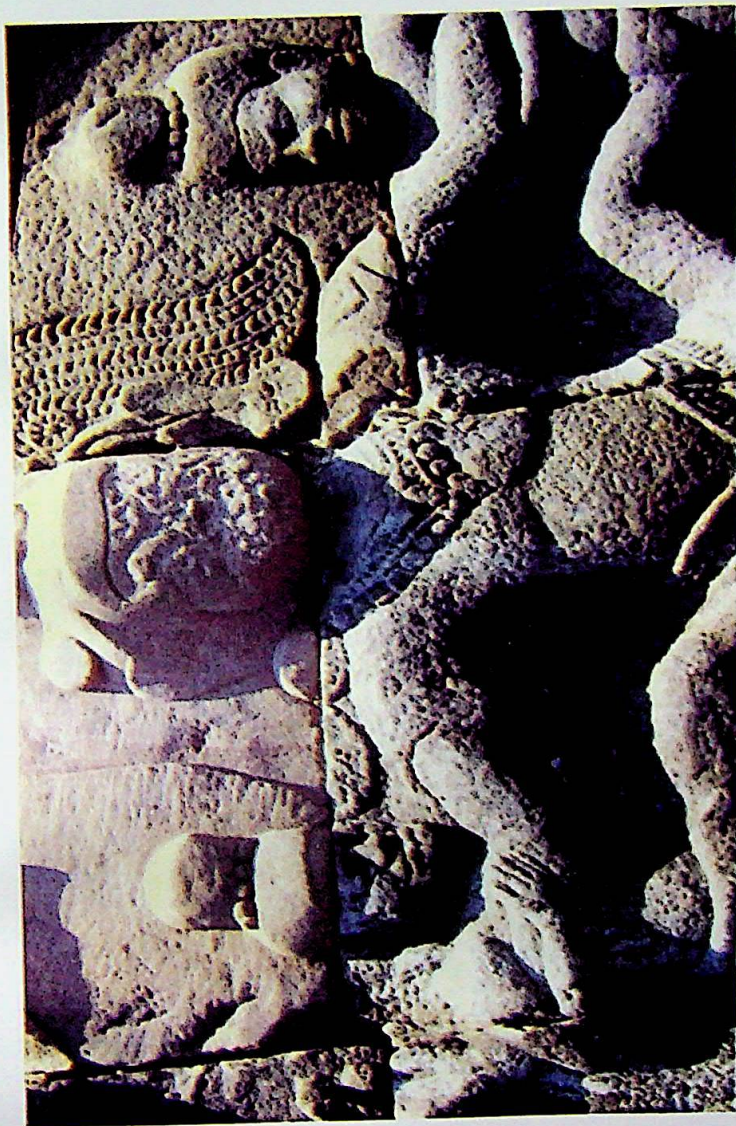
Prasad Hin Pimai – Main Prang - View from the Northwestern corner



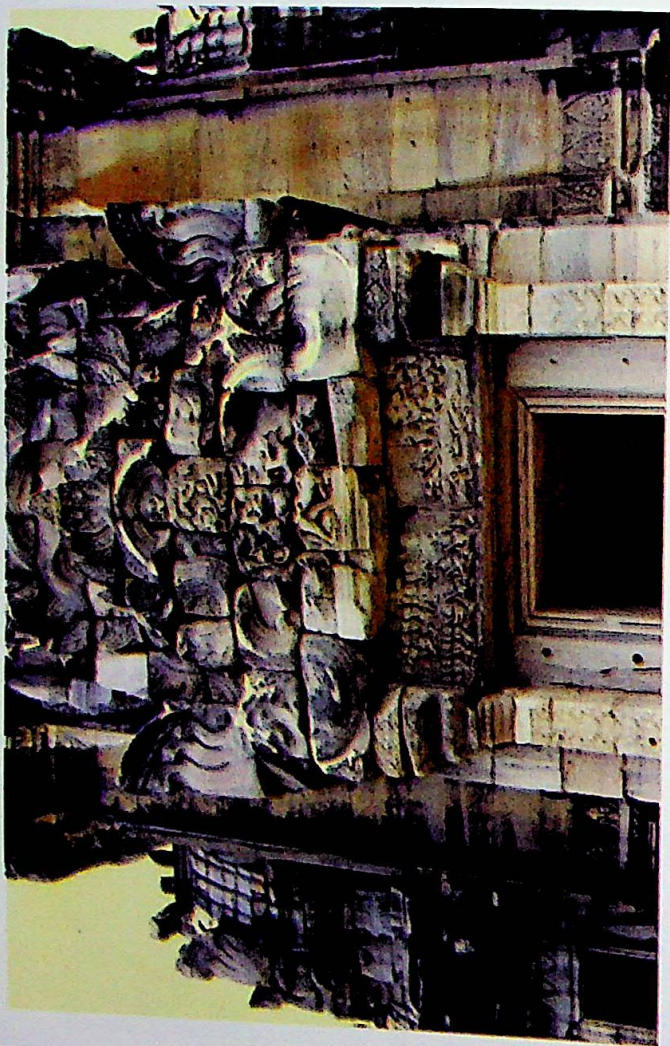
*Prasad Hin Pimai – Northern Side.
A boat procession*



*Prasad Hin Pimai – Western Gable.
Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā*



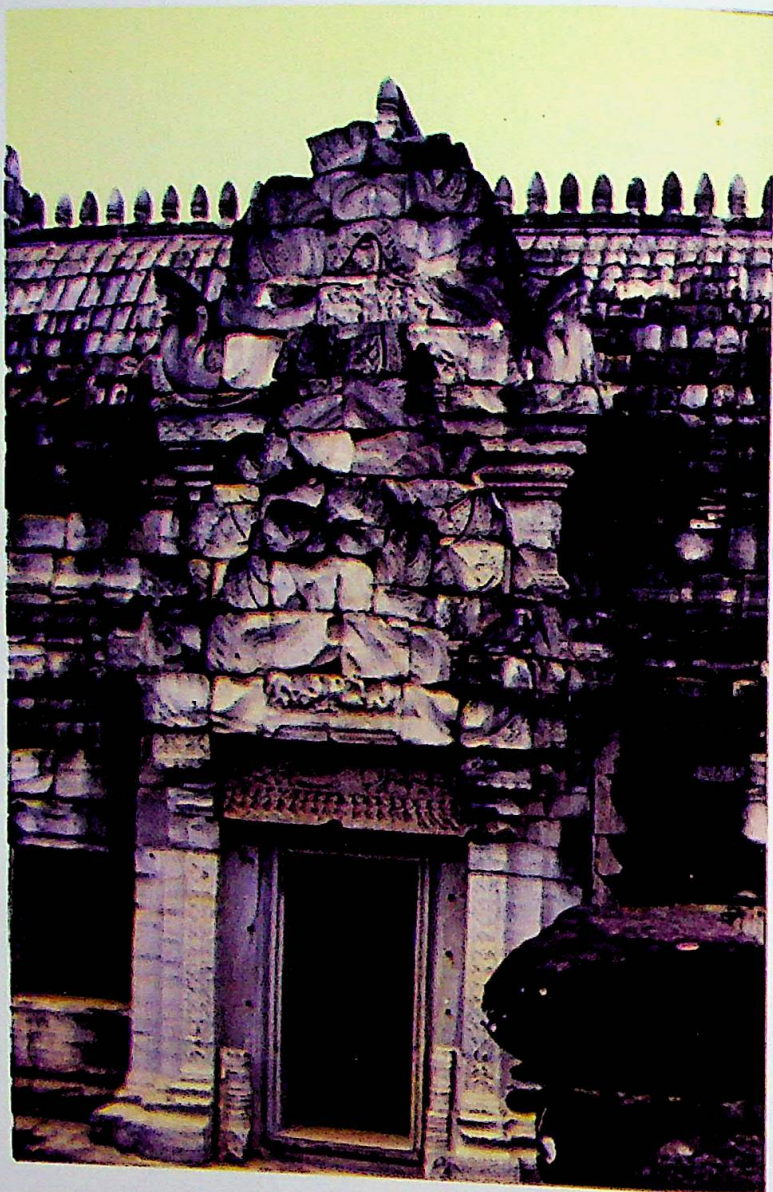
*Prasad Hin Pimai – Southern Gable of the eastern porch.
Ravana in middle - Ravana and Lakshmana on sides*



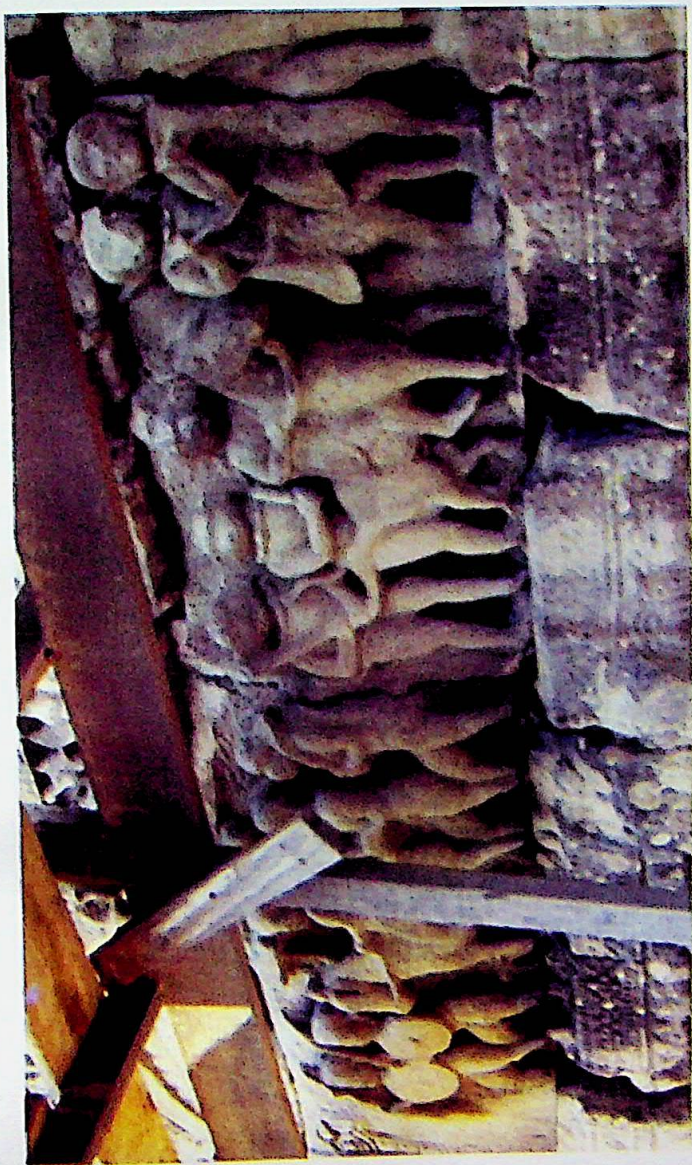
Prasad Hin Pimai – Building of the road to Lanikā



Prasad Hin Pimai – Coronation of Sugrīva



Prasad Hin Pimai – Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in Nāgapāsa



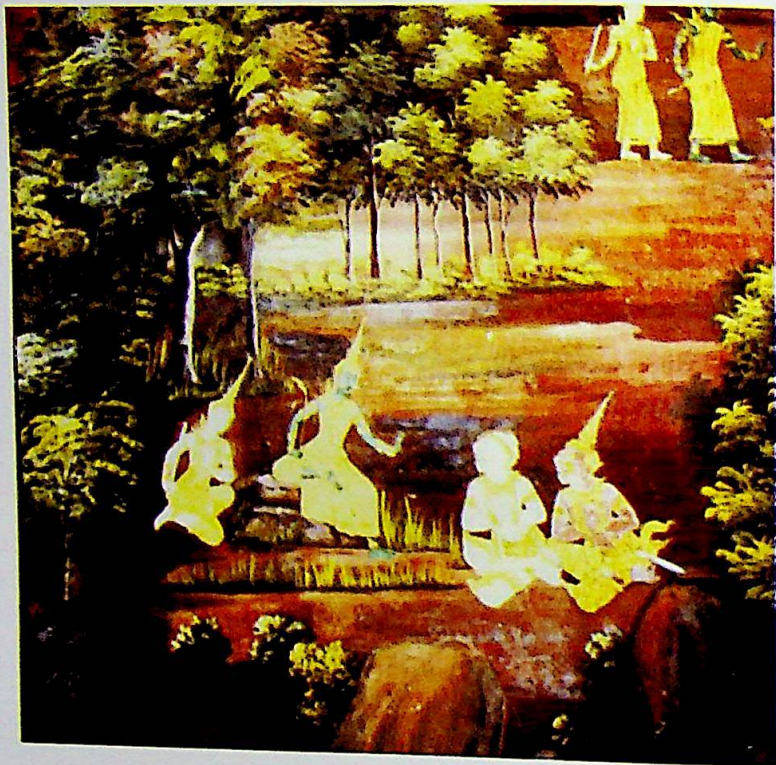
*Prasad Hin Pimai – Southern gable of the main prang.
Procession of human and monkey armies*



*Prasad Hin Pimai – Southern gable of main prang
Abduction of Sītā*



Prasad Hin Pimai – Rāma tending Jaṭāyu



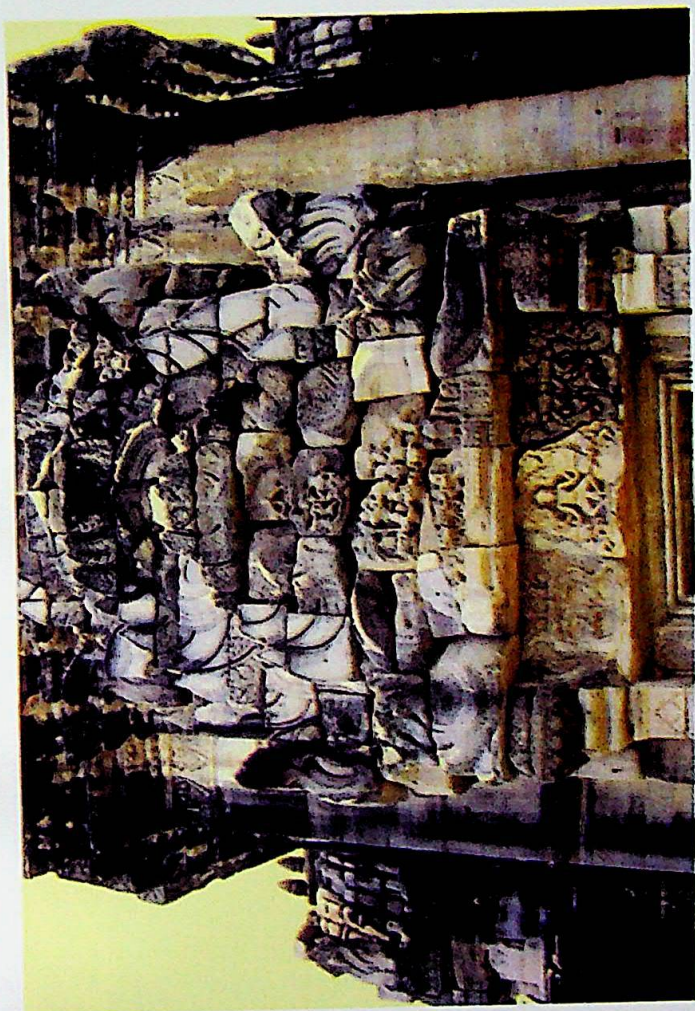
Prasad Hin Pimai – Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa meeting Sugrīva through Hanumān



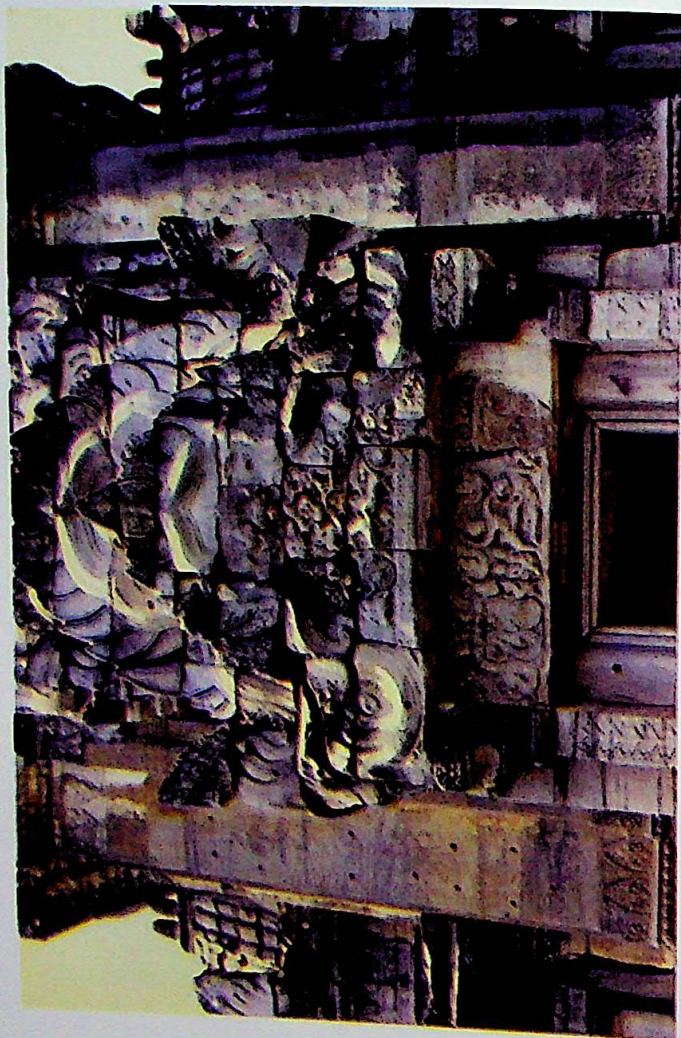
*Prasad Hin Pimai – Inside Maṇḍapa
Rāma fighting Rāvaṇa*



*Prasad Hin Pinai – Rāmāyaṇa Scene Aśvamedha found at
Thammasālā in front of the sanctuary*



Prasad Hin Pimai – Natarāja from back side



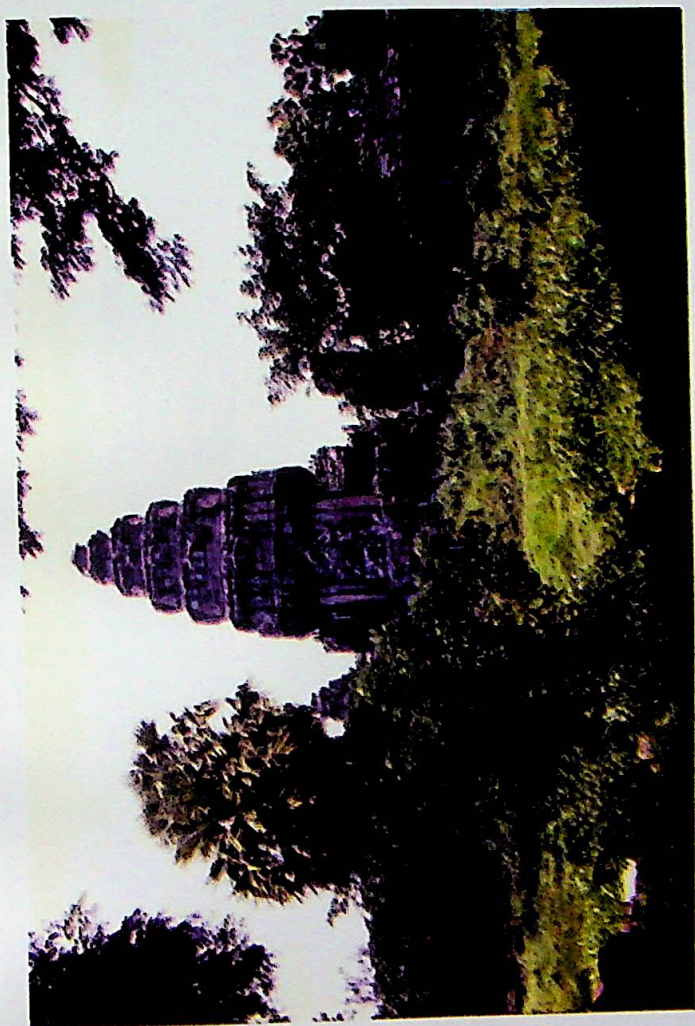
Prasad Hin Pimai – Kṛṣṇa killing Caṇūra



*Prasad Hin Pimai – Northern gable of the main prang
A fighting scene*



*Prasad Hin Pimai – Nārāyaṇa on Garuḍa
A stone lintel lying in the open*



Prasad Hin Pimai - Back Prang



Prasad Hin Pimai – View from the East

Prasad Muang Thi

The Prasad is situated 17 kms. east of Surin in the District of Sikhoraphum. There are three Pagodas there, two in front and the third, the bigger one, in the middle at the back. They are all made of brick, with plaster having almost gone off now. They have no carving or design at the moment. To all appearances they are Buddhist structures. A modern Wat stands nearby them. It has a beautiful gate, almost a riot of colour. Its gable carries a figure of a god on a three-trunked elephant, in all probability Indra. Except, of course, the gable and the top, the Wat is a cement structure.



Prasad Maung Thi

Prasad Ban Pluang

The Prasad is 34 kms. southwest of Surin in the District of Pra Sat. It is on a raised plinth of laterite. Outside of it is sandstone. There are carvings on its three sides. No carving on the backside, except some decorative carving on a part of the pillar. The sanctuary in the form of a single Prang has inside it the base, quite big and high, for the installation of image. The lintel on the main entrance among exquisite floral decorative carvings depicts Indra on elephant on a Kīrtimukha. At the top of the lintel are small figures, three on each side, of Ṛṣis. The gable depicts a big figure of a Kīrtimukha with a deity on it with the right hand raised, with one leg straight and the other bending and hanging. Below there are figures, in small size, of cows, one on each side of the deity. By the side of the cow on the left side of the deity are rather indistinct figures of two animals. By the side of the right cow (towards the left side) are two human figures, one sitting with knees raised and arms crossed and the other, probably a lady, sitting with folded legs with the right arm curved at the raised elbow. In all probability the carving depicts the Purāṇic scene of the lifting of Govardhana by Kṛṣṇa. This can also very well go with Indra on the lintel below for it was he who had caused excessive rain necessitating the lifting of the mount by the Lord for protection. By the sides of the doors there are two figures, one on each side, of the Dvārapālas, the guardians of the doors. On both sides at the bottom there are five-hooded Nāgas emitting a garland each.

Southern Side

On the southern side of the Prang on the lintel is depicted the scene of Kāliyadamana, the suppression of the Kāliya Nāga by baby Kṛṣṇa in a very peculiar head-dress. The depiction is simply exquisite and has few parallels in delicacy. On the gable is shown a Kīrtimukha. On him is shown Indra on an elephant in a stately posture, the Maharājājalā. Exquisite floral design is carved here. The door-frame also carries nice decorative design. The figures of

two R̥ṣis, one on each side, at the bottom of the door pillar with knees raised and hands folded, are found carved.

Western Side

It has a fake door. There are no carvings on it.

Northern Side

The lintel on the northern side depicts a Kīrtimukha with Indra on a three-headed elephant in the midst of exquisite floral design. Between the lintel and the gable on the panel there are figures of different animals: a monkey, a horse, a crocodile, some fish and cranes. On top of the lintel are figures of a bull, a squirrel, a boar, and an elephant.

On the gable is depicted a Kīrtimukha with a deity on it with one knee raised and one flat; the hands being on the knees. This side also has a fake door. There is a figure of a Dvārapāla, in the southeastern corner.

The Prasad has been reconstructed by the Silpakorn, the Department of Fine Arts of the Govt. of Thailand. The reconstruction started in B.E. 2514 and took four years to come to completion.

The Prasad has four tanks in front. The two front tanks seem to have extensions at the back also. Back side and the top of the Prasad are incomplete. Maybe its construction had to be stopped abruptly before it could come to completion.

The Prasad has raised platforms of laterite protruding on three sides. The platforms are about three metres high and extend about six metres on the northern and the southern side and about five metres on the eastern side.

The carvings on the Prang are in the Lopburi style, which suggests that it might have been set up between 11th and the 12th cen. A.D. Because of the Kṛṣṇa carvings, it appears to have been a Vaiṣṇava sanctuary. A visit to it is a treat to connoisseurs of art. In sheer finesse and delicate treatment of the themes in stone it has few parallels.

*Prasad Ban Pluang*



*Prasad Ban Pluang – Eastern gable
Lifting of the Mount Govardhana*



*Prasad Ban Pluang – lintel on the eastern door
Indra on elephant*

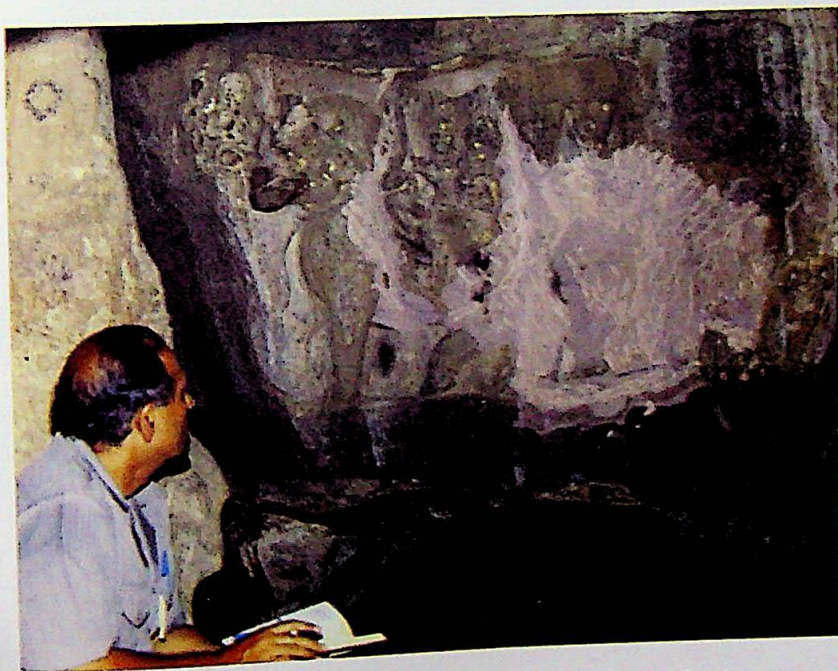


*Prasad Ban Pluang – Lintel on the northern door
Scene of Kāliyadamana*

Tham Vua Daeng (The Cave of the Red Bull)

The Tham Vua Daeng is a cave about 57 kms. from Khonburi, a small town about 60 kms. away from the major city of Nakhon Ratchasima. It is approachable now by a newly cut road which passes by a Wat that is on a flat rocky surface. One has to go to some 200 metres down the rocky path to reach the cave which faces the rice fields in the valley between the two mountains. It has an exquisite carving of Śiva and Pārvatī on Nandi. Śiva is shown carrying the trident in his hand. His left knee is resting on the lap of Pārvatī. He is shown wearing a smile. Nandi is quite big in size and is also portrayed in a smile, a feat of artistic skill in that an animal has been shown wearing it. Pārvatī is looking bashful. Near the head of the bull are shown two figures. Towards the rear of the bull are signs of scratching on the stone leading to the inference of the existence of a panel there originally which had later been scratched out in all probability in an act of vandalism. On top of the scratched out panel are two emblems. Towards its rear, to the right, two feet of some lost figure are seen. Further towards the right is a figure with face gone off. From its folded hands that are visible now it appears to have been a figure of a devotee. The entire carving in the cave is on sandstone. The figures of Śiva and Pārvatī are all intact luckily and are specimens of excellent carving both in the portrayal of figures and emotions. The unknown artist has pictured superbly the scene of Śiva and Pārvatī in love making in a very happy setting. When the master is happy, it is an occasion for the servant also to be happy. That is why Nandi is shown wearing a broad smile. In the act of love-making both the principal actors take active part. While Śiva's left knee rests on Pārvatī's lap Pārvatī's one hand skirts Śiva's waist and rests on his right thigh. In accordance with tradition Pārvatī is shown to the left of Śiva's. The head-dresses of the divine couple differ and are marked by intricate carving. The lower garments of both (Śiva and Pārvatī) are striped and a little above the knees. Pārvatī in her hand carries something, may be a flower and Śiva's hand touches her breast from under the armpit. The two figures at the head of Nandi mentioned earlier, could be those of two Rsis, one

sitting on knees with hands folded, almost in a crouching posture and the other with hands crossed against the chest in the posture of one knee raised and one knee folded. He is shown holding in his right hand something, probably a rosary, which would indicate that he and his companion are devotees. Nandi is shown wearing a necklace which is visible in the carving by its beads. It looks quite attractive. The entire carving depicts a very happy scene and is one of the most charming in the whole of Thailand.



Tham Vua Daeng – The Cave of the Red Bull, the author having an intent look at the Cave



*Tham Yua Daeng – The Cave of the Red Bull, Śiva and Pārvatī on Nandī in happy mood.
Even Nandī, the Bull is shown smiling.
The artist is at his best here.*



Tham Vua Daeng – Śiva and Pārvaṭī on Nandī (a clearer picture)

Kuṭī R̥ṣi

Popularly called Ku Lisi (Ku could be short form of Kuṭī of Sanskrit) lies 5 kms. further from the point the road branches off to Ku Suan Taeng in the direction of the provincial town of Nakhon Ratchasima. It is approachable by travelling about a mile on an unpaved road that branches off towards the left from, as said above, the distance of 5 kms. from the point the road branches off for Prang Ku Suan Taeng. Enclosed in a laterite wall going round it, it is a small structure about 280 metres high of laterite with door frames made of sandstone. It has three fake doors on three sides. The door in front has two decorated sandstone door columns, one of them partially damaged. The door frames, including the fake ones, have lining. The Kuṭī R̥ṣi has a small porch. Inside the Kuṭī is now installed under a tinshed a Buddha image of later period. At the southeastern corner are ruins of a Vihāra of laterite facing west. there are no carvings anywhere.

There were some legends connected with Prang Ku Lisi and Prang Ku Suan Taeng. The people of the present generation do not remember them. One lady of the older generation who is said to have known them is now no more. The local residents say that a teacher had come many years back and had them recorded from her. Who this teacher was and from where he had come they are unable to say.



A R̥ṣi on the boundary stone of Kuṭṭi R̥ṣi



Door of Kuṭi R̥ṣi



General view of Kuṭṭi R̥ṣi

Prang Ku Suan Taeng

The site of many an interesting and important archaeological find, Prang Ku Suan Taeng stands at a distance of about 18 kms. west of the District town of Buddhaisong or approximately 119 kms. from the provincial town of Buriram. Upto 117 kms. from Buriram it is all paved road. After that an unpaved road branches off to the south. About two kms. on that lies the shrine. It has three Prangs, all made of brick, with the exception of the door frames which are in sandstone. The middle Prang, the biggest of the three Prangs, has a door in front that faces the east. It has in its inside two pedestals one rectangular and one square for the deities. All the lintels in the Prangs are not in situ now, having been removed to the museums at Pimai, Nakhon Ratchasima and Bangkok. The other two Prangs also have one door each which faces the east but none of them has fake doors. The base of the Prangs is of laterite. At the front and the back of the southern Prangs lie big stone pieces with lotus petal motif. These might have formed part of the finial.

The middle Prang has a door frame at some distance from it at its front side which might have formed part of the porch. The Prangs are redented at corners.

At the back of the Prangs there are some diggings for ancient objects by interested people.

The middle Prang is about 15 metres high. The Prang in the south has two stones in front now dug in the earth, one vertically and the other horizontally. One of these might have been a balustrade and the other a lintel. Amidst a huge rubble of bricks are found some stone pieces a few of which carry some sort of carving.

All the fake doors in the Prangs carry lining and knobs at intervals in the middle. Near the dug up hollows are carved pieces, like the piece with a portion of Nāga and so on, which might have formed part of the structures.

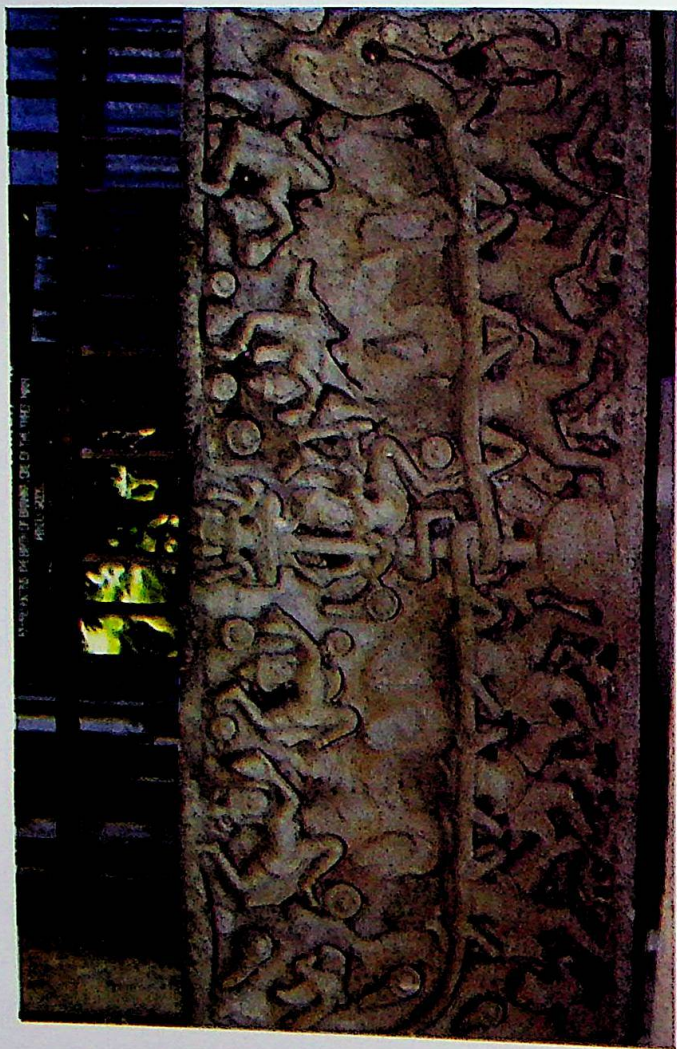
According to the information furnished by some of the local residents some persons carried out in the night, some three nights

prior to 16.10.1979, clandestine digging which yielded them some sculptures that were now, thanks to the timely report, with the police. Among the yield are two figures that deserve particular notice. Both have heads broken but traceable no doubt amidst the big heap of small or large pieces that include a few broken limbs. One is that of a R̥ṣi with a rod and the other is that of a lady with a flower. The figures are beautiful pieces of art.

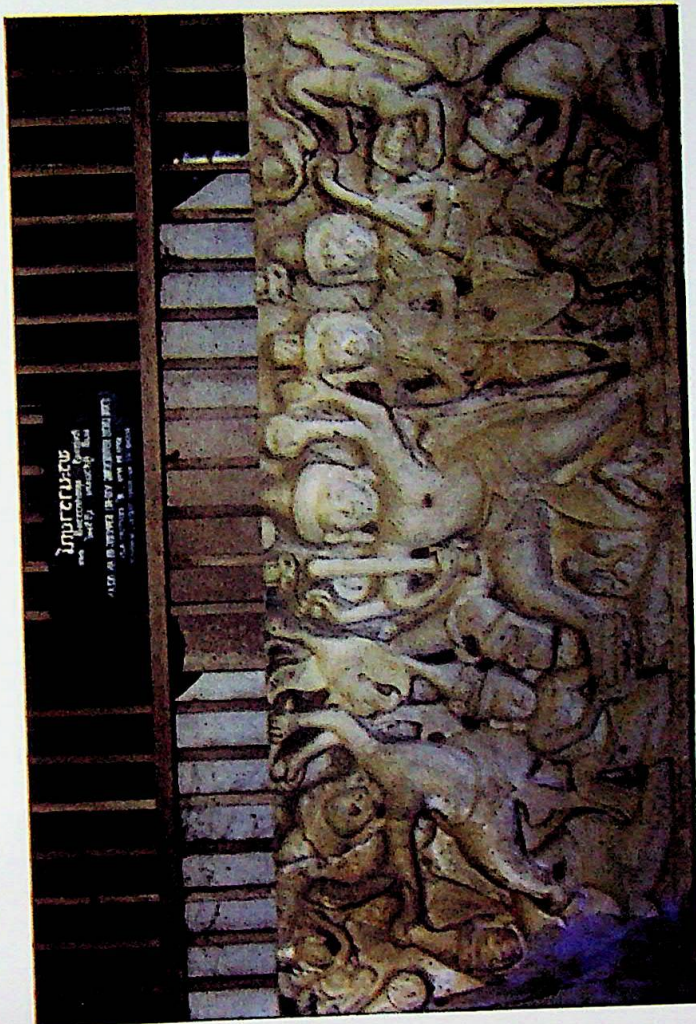
The three sides of the middle Prang and the Prang towards the north have balustrades.

The Prangs are approachable by a flight of four small steps, all made of brick and plastered with cement. These are followed by a flat surface going up. The interior of the Prangs is rather small, something of the order of 4' × 4'.

A shed to serve as the residence of a monk in front of the Prangs has been erected recently.



Prang Ku Suan Taeng – churning of the ocean



Prang Ku Suan Taeng – Visnu standing on the ocean



Prang Ku Suan Taeng – Dancing Śiva

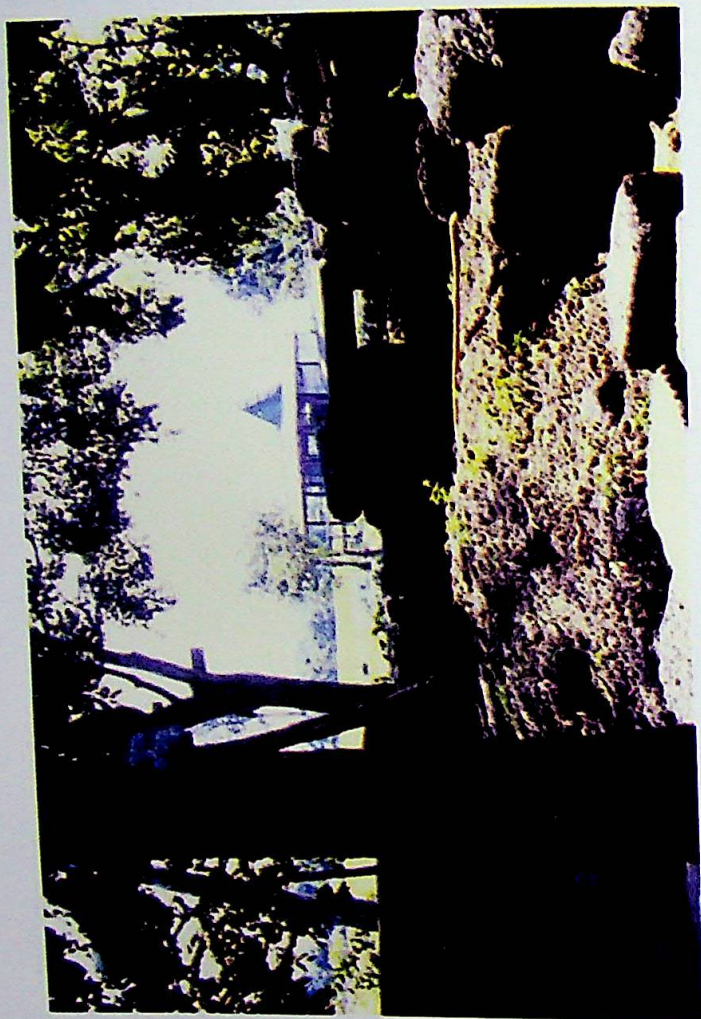
Prasad Ban Khok Ngiew

It is situated about 2 kms. north of Ban Pakhan on the unpaved Nang Rong-Ban Pakhan Road. It is a single Prang structure made of laterite and enclosed in a laterite wall. The door- frame of the porch and the sanctuary are of sandstone. It is about 10 metres high. The sanctuary is quite small and is of square shape. The Prang is redented at the corners. There are fake doors on three sides with one door frame. On the southern side are seen ruins of a Vihāra facing west. The Gopuram with three door- frames made of sandstone is without roof. The fourth one with door-frames also of sandstone now lies in a heap of mud. The porch to the Gopuram has sandstone door-frames. Close by to it is a newly erected Wat. There are sandstone blocks lying in the open compound which might have formed the lintels of the balustrade. A circular stone with a hole in the middle lies near the boundary wall. It might have originally formed part of the finial.

The Prang is in a fairly good condition.

The Chief Abbot Lek gave the information that a Garuḍa figure had been dug up from there. Since the figure of Avalokiteśvara has been found from there, one may well say the Prang might have been built in 1139 A. D. in the time of King Jayavarman VII.

The inner sanctuary of the shrine could be of the size of 4'X4' approxiamtly.



Prasad Khok Ngiew - A general view



Prasad Ban Khaok Ngiew – Another view

Wat Pho Yoi

Situated in the Ban Pakhan Sub District, Wat Pho Yoi is as good a Wat as any other. What distinguishes it, however, from others of the kind is the presence in it of panels with exquisite carvings of scenes drawn, with the exception of one, from Hindu mythology. It might have originally been a Hindu temple. Its Ubosoth (Uposatha) is said to have been built over an old Prang. The altar of the Buddha image in the Ubosoth has a decorated image in it. The Ubosoth, is decorated with the carved lintels, the remains in all probability of an old Prang on both sides, front and back. Of the two lintels in front, the one to the left depicts the scene of a king in Lalitāsana (with one leg hanging and the other folded and resting on a seat looking like throne). To his right are depicted two ladies one of whom is shown rather diminutive. The diminutive one looks like being presented to the king by the other one who is shown carrying the former on her palm. The diminutive lady carries something in her hand. The king is depicted extending his hand, probably to receive the gift. He is shown wearing a pleasant smile. So are shown the ladies and the attendants. The entire scenario exudes happiness. To the king's left are two attendants. One of them next to the king carries a bow and an arrow and the one next to him carries a chowrie.

The lintel to the right has the figure of Indra on three-headed elephant carved in the middle of the garland that extends on both sides.

The lintel at the back to the right again depicts Indra on the three-headed elephant in the middle of the garland which like the one on the front side lintel extends on both sides. The garland in its turn is divided by the figure of a lady each on both sides.

The back side has in the centre a decorated pillar. The lintel at the back to the left has in its middle the figure of Śiva on bull on Kāla face which is depicted clutching at a garland, with both of its hands.

All the four lintels carry on them beautiful floral decoration.

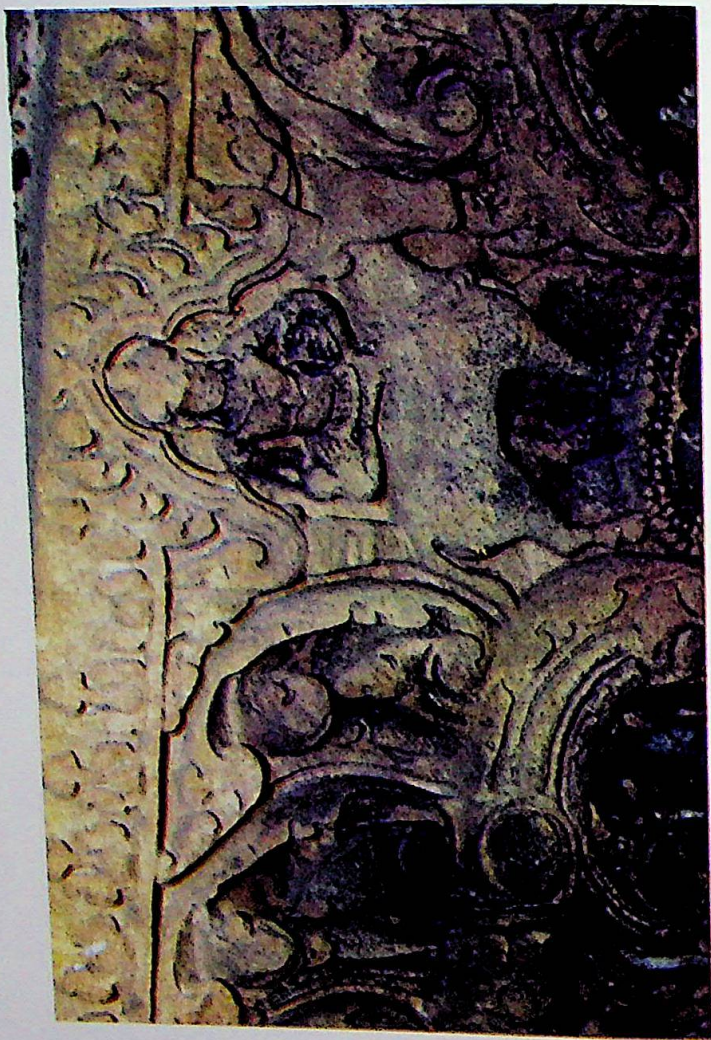
On the altar itself there is a pedestal for image which might

be the remnant of the old Prang. The altar also has two boundary stones, one flat and the other conical with decoration on them. Around the Ubosoth are boundary stones with carvings of seated R̥ṣis on two sides, front and back.

The Chief Abbot of the Wat has in his personal room a statue of the Buddha in sandstone under Nāga heads which is said to have been found from the old Prang. Besides this there is a small statue of the Buddha again in sandstone, presented to him not long ago. It is of later period.



Wat Pho Yoi – R̥ṣi on the boundary stone



*Wat Pho Yoi – Back Side lintel
Śiva on Nandi*



*Wat Pho Yoi – Back side lintel
Indra on elephant*

Prasad Ban Khok Padiad

Situated in the Ban Pakhan Sub-district, the Prasad is approachable by a narrow path through the rice fields from the village Ban Padiad which is at a distance of about two kms. The Prasad is in a highly dilapidated condition. It is surrounded by a laterite wall about $2\frac{1}{2}$ metres high. It has no roof. The Prasad's present height is about 4 metres. Made of sandstone it is lined inside with laterite. It has two fake doors intact while the third one at the back has given way to an opening. It has marks of diggings all over which indicates that efforts have continued to be made to remove from it all that might have been considered worthwhile. It has the Gopuram to the east and a small path a little towards the south. A lintel piece with beautiful floral carving is the only attraction in the otherwise ruined shrine. There are also some other pieces here but only with indistinct carving. The door frames of the Prasad that pierce the walls are all of sandstone.

The prasad is overgrown with trees and shrubs and is difficult of access. If the compound of it were to be systematically and scientifically excavated there is every possibility of the discovery of interesting finds.

The Headmaster of the Nong Bug Primary School when contacted gave the information that the beautiful carved lintels and stones with figures of seated hermits and such other precious treasures now preserved in Wat Pho Yoi were taken from Prasad Ban Padiad. He also referred to the fact that one of the elephants employed to carry them died according to the popular belief that the spirits of the Prasad did not approve of the transfer.



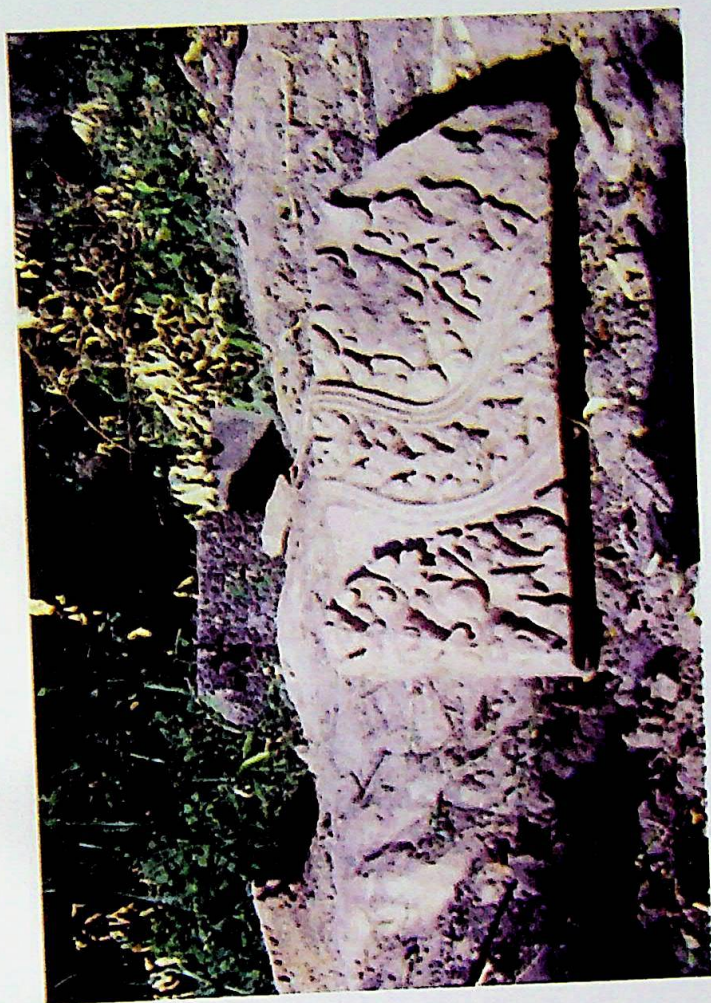
The author is seen clicking the photo of Prasad Ban Khok Padiad

*Prasad Ban Khok Padiad*



Prasad Ban Khok Paditad — The Wall

*Prasad Ban Khok Padiad*



Prasad Ban Khok Padiad – A Carved Stone



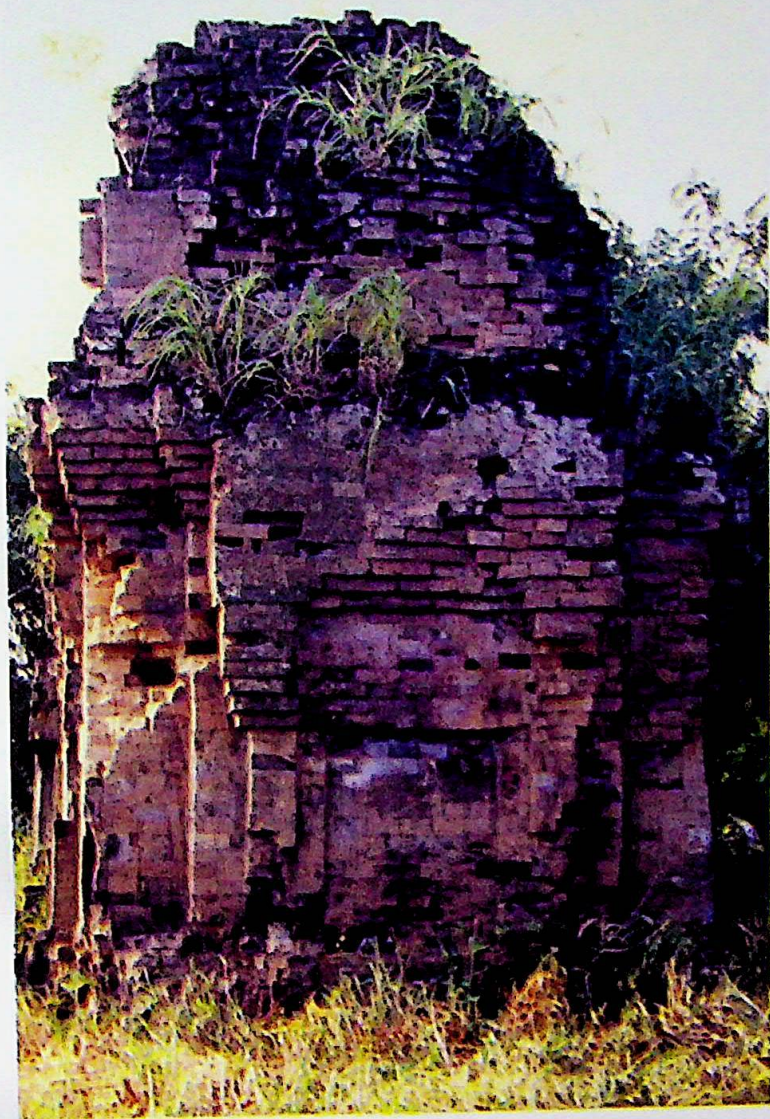
Prasad Ban Khok Padiad – A Fake Door



Prasad Ban Khok Padiad – Base for image



Prasad Ban Khok Padiad – Carved lintel with the abbot



Prasad Ban Khok Padiad – Side View of Northern Prang



Prasad Ban Khok Padiad – Top parts in the wall nearby used as flower pots now



Prasad Ban Khok Padiad – Back View of Middle Prang

Ban Prasad (Amphoe Prasad, Tambon Plai)

Also called Prasad Plai it is situated at a distance of 24 kms. to the northwest of Surin. From Surin Ban Cha Plerng in the direction of Prasad Amphoe is 18 kms. An unpaved road branches off from there to Tambon Plai. About 6 kms. from there is the Ban Prasad. It is a three Prang structure of bricks. Of the third Prang to the west only the door frame and the base are left. The biggest of the three Prangs, the middle Prang has a stone lintel without carving. The door frames of all the Prangs are made of sandstone. The Prangs are now in ruins. It could have carved stones in it but these were removed from it later. This was the information provided by a local resident. When he was young, said he, he had gone about searching for ancient objects around the Prasad with a view to selling them. It is likely that the carvings of the Prasad were removed from it in this way and disposed of. There are four rectangular ponds in front of the Prasad in the vicinity of which many sandstone pieces are now lying. They might well have formed the topmost parts of the Prangs. The doors of the Prangs are narrow. The cells are small. So is the inside of them. Some laterite stone pieces can be seen lying here and there. There is a newly built Wat nearby which has a piece of carved lintel with a carved garland and the filial parts of the Prangs with the motif of lotus petals in a row which are now being used as flower pots.

Prasad Wat Kamphaeng Yai

This is at km. 25 on the road from Srisaket to Surin, at a distance of about 2 kms. west of Udumphon Phisai. It is surrounded by an approximately 1½ metre wide gallery of laterite. It has at present four Prangs and two Vihāras. The Vihāras are at the front side and are interposed by a newly built building which might have been a Prang originally. The Vihāra in the northeast of the Prangs has on its lintel the carving of Viṣṇu on the serpent bed, Śeṣaśayyā, with Lakṣmī together with other female deities pressing his feet. Brahmā is shown coming out of the lotus from his navel. The Vihāra to the southeast of the Prangs has a lintel

fallen in front of it with the carving of Śiva and Pārvati on Nandi in procession. Out of the four Prangs three are in front and one is the biggest with exquisite decorative motif in stone on some of the panels flanking the doors as also at the bases, each side on the top. The inner stone lintel of the inner door has an interesting, quite well preserved, carving showing a Kīrtimukha with Indra on elephant on it. The Kīrtimukha is depicted holding with both hands on both sides a leg each of the lions emitting garlands. At the end of the garlands there are two lions also emitting them (garlands). On top of Indra are shown a series of swans separated by a line in stone. In the middle of the garlands is seen Garuḍa. Some part of it is made of bricks. Otherwise the whole of it is in stone.

The Prang in the south is made of bricks like the one in the north. Only the door frames of both are made of stone. They have interestingly enough, one door column with some carving. It looks the carving on them was left unfinished. The roofs of all the Prangs and Vihāras have come down. The Prang at the back is made of bricks and has no carvings. Its door frame also is made of stone. In the compound of the Prasad are lying in the open some stone boulders with carvings such as the Nāga head on them. The Vihāra to the northeast of the Prang has a porch with two stone boulders of which only one is now left.

The Wat was built in B.E. 2368, about a hundred years back.

The newly built building between the two Vihāras has a hall wherein are kept some of the things dug up from beneath it. One of them is the statue of the Buddha which is shown seated on the Nāga with seven heads. The other is a panel with Navagrahas, nine planets, shown on their vehicles. The third is the model of a Prang. Besides, there are two stone pieces with figures carved on them. The heads of these are missing. But from their appearance they seem to be those of Ṛṣis. One is rather distinct with the loin-cloth and the rosary on the chest quite visible. The other is rather blurred. There are other stone pieces also lying stored in a corner with decorative carvings. One of these is like the one described above, a figure in lion cloth, evidently the figure of a Ṛṣi.



Prasad Wat Kamphaeng Yai – A piece of lintel lying in the open



Prasad Wat Kamphaeng Yai – Viṣṇu on Śeṣasayyā



Prasad Wat Kamphaeng Yai – Śiva and Pārvatī on Nandi



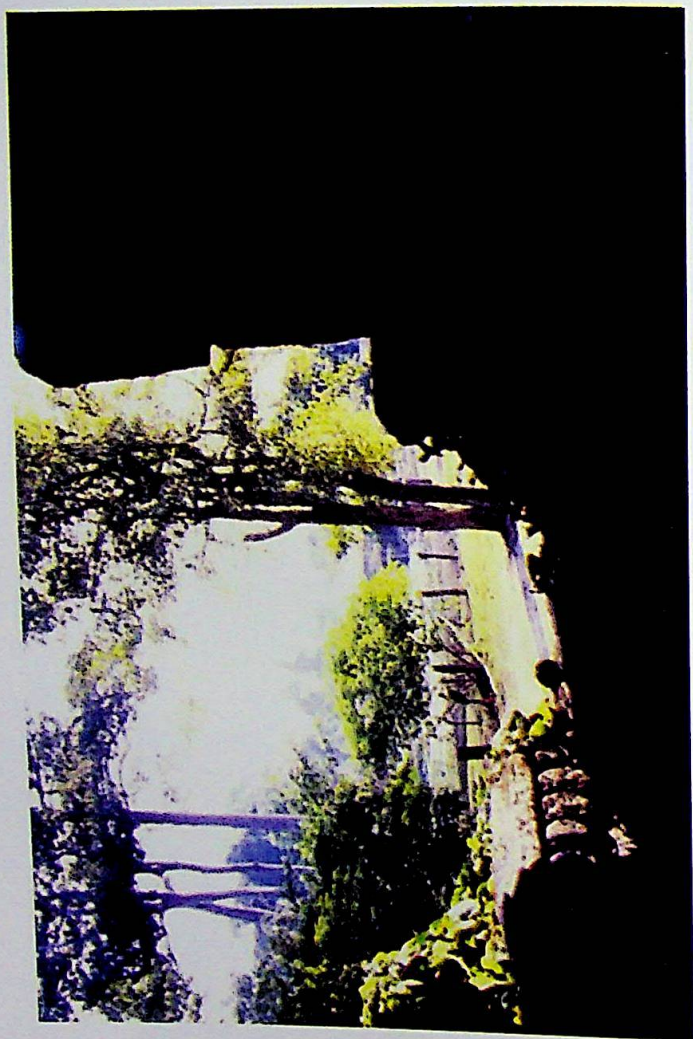
Prasad Wat Kamphaeng Yai – Viṣṇu on Śeṣaśayya



Prasad Wat Kamphaeng Yai – A Side View



*Prasad Wat Kamphaeng Yai – Inside lintel of middle prang
Indra on elephant*



Prasad Wat Kamphaeng Yai – Part of Gopuram



Prasad Wat Kamphaeng Yai – A general view from outside

Ṛṣis in Thailand

There is a place on the route Surin-Srisaket. It is called Bu Rasi, Sanskrit Bu Ṛṣi, the Śiṛṣakeśa, one with hair on the head, evidently a Ṛṣi who has matted hair. The name of a Hindu Temple on the Buddhaisong-Nakhon Ratchasima road is Kuṭi Ṛṣi. A cave near Ratchaburi town has the name Tham (=cave) Rasi. The names Bu Rasi, Srisaket, point towards the presence of the Ṛṣis in Thailand, Particularly in its northeastern part, due to the contact with the highly Hinduised Khmers and the prominence that they enjoyed. This would also go very well with the large number of the figures of the Ṛṣis found at Prasad Panom Rung, Prasad Kamphaeng Yai, Wat Pho Yoi, Prasad Hin Pimai and so on. Even the powerful Khmer ruler Narendrāditya lived like a Ṛṣi subsisting on fruits and practising penance in a cave reference to which is found in a Sanskrit inscription from Prasad Panom Rung. The figures of the Ṛṣis in stone are exactly like those of the ones in India: loincloth, matted hair, long beard, rosary in hand and so on.

Wat Pasa Kamphaeng Noy

(Pa = forest, Sa = pond, a natural one)

It is at a distance of about 8 kms. on the road Srisaket-Udumphon Phisai. A wall of laterite goes round it. It has a Gopuram with door frame of sandstone. Outside it, in the open, is lying on the ground a carved lintel with a scene rather indistinct. The garland in it is, however, clear. Some laterite stones have fallen down from the Gopuram and are lying outside it helter skelter. Near the Gopuram, towards the inside, are two cells on both sides with two small sandstone doors. At the back of the Gopuram, inside the enclosure, a sandstone is lying upside down with the indistinct scene of a deity on Kīrtimukha. Rather distinct on this is the garland.

On the southeastern corner of the enclosure is a Vihāra of laterite, now is ruins.

Inside the enclosure at the back is a Prang made of laterite with no carving except the one at the small door column which has a decorative motif.

In front of the Prang is a lintel with indistinct carving.

A piece of sandstone with the lotus petal carving now lying on the surrounding wall towards the north of the Gopuram might have formed the topmost part of the roof. It is happily almost intact and not crumbled down. Similarly near the inner door of the Gopuram is a carved piece of sandstone with the same lotus petal motif, a probable fall out from the top part. A piece of sandstone with a big hole in it is lying near the inner gate of the Gopuram. It might also have formed the upper part of the shrine.

The Prang faces the east while the Vihāra faces the west.

A small structure with cement stands with roof half enclosed by laterite, obviously from the shrine, is a recent structure in the enclosure by all appearances. It has on a two-tier pedestal some small figures of the Buddha. A monastery exists in the vicinity of the shrine.

A piece of sandstone with very distinct carving is lying near the Vihāra. The carving has a garland motif.

There is a small pond to the northeast of the shrine followed by a big pond at some distance.

In the Wat nearby is found a sandstone pedestal for a deity with the figure of Yoni making it appear thereby that Wat Pasa Kamphaeng Noy might have been originally a Śaiva sanctuary.



Prasad Wat Pasa Kamphaeng Noy - Gopuram



Prasad Wat Pasa Kamphaeng Noy – Lintel in the open

Wat Phra Kona

It is in the District of Suwannaphum in the Province of Roi Et, 84 kms. north of Surin. It is a new Wat with three old Prangs in a compound encircled with a laterite wall on all four sides. There is a remnant of a big Gopuram on the eastern side entrance. The plinth of the compound is high. A five-hooded Nāga emitted by Kāla in sandstone is found at the ground from where the plinth begins to rise. The entrance lintel on the Gopuram depicts a Kīrtimukha, tongue out, with a deity on it in Lalitāsana.

Inside the compound, in the southeastern corner, is a structure without roof, in laterite, most probably a Vihāra. At the broken door of it lies a stone boulder with a carving. From the figure of a bull with a human form on it, it gives the appearance of Śiva riding Nandi. Some people are shown in front of the figure and some at the back giving the appearance of a procession. The carving on the boulder might well be depicting the scene of Śiva riding Nandi in procession.

Out of the three Prangs in the compound, the middle one is the biggest, a practice common to all three-Prang shrines. All the Prangs here are made of bricks. Their door panels with their bases, however, are of red sandstone. All the Prangs face the east. The peculiarity with regard to the middle Prang is that it has been given an altogether a new shape recently. Plastered in cement it carries now a number of Buddha figures in cornices and is conjoined to a new construction forming its extension as it were. The new construction, very much in the style of a Wat, apiece with other constructions around has the figure of the Buddha in it.

The Prang in the south is in its original form and is in a fairly dilapidated condition. The plaster of it is almost all gone, with bricks peeping out. Wherever, however something of it still sticks on, faint decorative carving meets the eye.

The Prangs in the original form have fake doors on all sides, except the eastern one, a peculiarity that they share with other similar structures elsewhere.

On the lintel of the fake door in the northern direction of this Prang in the south, a carving depicts a Kīrtimukha, a figure with a deity on it and a figure broken and indistinct, amidst the floral designs.

The Prang in the northern side is also in a fairly dilapidated condition. Something new has been added to it towards the sides as also the front with a view to forming an extension of it much in the same manner as in the middle Prang. The extension is in the nature of a Buddhist Wat. Behind the Prang a carved lintel, which in all probability is a fall out from it has a very interesting figure of that of a deity with Trident, Trīśūla, in right hand riding a winged bird with human face, with feet like those of a bird, putting on a girdle extending frontwards and wearing ear-rings, Kuṇḍalas, in a sitting posture. The human-faced winged bird is in turn shown riding a six-hooded Nāga. The obvious conjecture would be that the deity with Trident, Trīśūla, is Śiva and the human-faced winged bird is Garuḍa. If that be so, the carving assumes utmost importance for, it is extremely rare, if not altogether impossible, to find Śiva riding Garuḍa whose association with Viṣṇu as his vehicle is all too well-known. The lintel carrying the above carving has big floral designs. In the riding posture one foot of Śiva is shown touching the chest of Garuḍa. The other leg, the left one, is folded.

The front of the Prang which is now enclosed within an extension of it, a new structure by all means, has some very highly interesting carvings. On the lintel above the entrance is a floral design. The middle of it has a void now, but with the evidence of the hands clutching at a garland, a feature found in many other carvings found elsewhere, it should not be difficult to suppose that it would have been a Kīrtimukha that would have stood there originally. On top of the lintel is the figure of Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu, on the Śeṣa bed, the Śeṣa-śayyā, with his consort Lakṣmī shampooing his feet. Nārāyaṇa is shown holding an unblown lotus in his left hand. There are figures of two birds, probably *hamsas*, swans, on either side of the Lord, towards the side of the head and towards the side of the feet. Further up this is a fighting scene. Two

monkeys are shown in a posture of duel. The monkeys could well be Vālin and Sugrīva. In between them is a small human figure difficult to identify. A replica of the above, obviously newly-made, lies on the floor. Beside this lies a figure, a statuette, of a human being, not possible to identify, with a peculiar head-dress. The figure might have been that of a Khmer King.

A point of difference between the two Prangs, the one in the south and the one in the north, that should not go unnoticed is that while the place for the image in the former is at some height and is approachable with the climbing of a few steps, it also is narrow, it is plain, i.e. not at height, and is wider in the latter, which also carries the old plaster.

A part of a massive Śikhara, which must have been a fall out from one of the Prangs is lying in the open compound now by the side of a stone beam.

Prang Ban Thanon Hak

It is at a distance of about 4 kms. from the main road to Buriram, 23 kms. from Chokchai. It is now in a Wat. By the side of it is a pond. Surrounded by laterite wall it is now in ruins. Only the door frame of sandstone and the part of the laterite wall of the sancturary now remain. To the east of it are found remains in laterite of what might have been the Gopuram. In the inside compound some stone boulders are lying here and there. Some of them have decorative carving. A Nāga head is among them.

A part of the Prang making the shape of a small Prang is kept in the Wat Ban Thanon Hak. There are pieces of carved stone by its side. A precious possession of the Wat is the figure of a deity with the part below the thighs broken off. The figure is in a frame decorated with floral design. One hand of the deity is at the waist, and the other is hanging. From the breasts it appears to be a female deity. It has earrings. It is difficult to identify it in the absence of any other sign. It was dug up from the pond to the north of the Prang. The head-dress of the deity is peculiar with a knot above. The posture is that of calmness, Praśānta. The Prang has been the site of the discovery of an inscription.



Prang Ban Thanon Hak – A general View



Prang Ban Thanon Hak - A side view



Prasad Ban Inanon Ilak – A Deity

Prasad Hin Ban Bu Yai

It is 30 kms. west of Nakhon Ratchasima to the left of the Friendship Highway. At present it is totally in ruins. Stones are lying here and there. One Śikhara with the carving of lotus petals around it is the only piece of some interest. Some stones have lining on them. One such big stone is placed against a tree. Once a big temple, as the name Yai (=big) would suggest, it is now a jumble of stones lying helter skelter. The stone boulders lying are of the sandstone variety. One large piece of stone has the motif of big leaves.



Prang Hin Ban Bu Yai

Prasad Muang Khaek

It is about 4 kms. from Prasad Muang Kau. A signboard near it points to its being of the Lopburi period, i.e. of the 11th Cen. A.D. Only four door frames, two big and two small, are now left of it. A few stone boulders are lying at some distance from it. There are three pedestals for images lying in the open in a row. The middle one of square shape is the biggest. The rest of the two, though smaller, are taller. A small stone piece with a faint sign of carving lying nearby could be of some interest.

A wall seems to have gone round the Prasad as indicated by the mound and the stones going round in the vicinity. There are remains of some other structure to the north of the Prasad.

The base of the shrine in stone is still noticeable.

Prasad Muang Kau

It is about 30 kms. west of Nakhon Ratchasima, 3 kms. to the right of the Friendship Highway. It has no carving on it. The Prasad is very much in ruins. Only the shape persists. Some stones fallen from it are lying around. The Prasad has only two structures, one Prang of sandstone and laterite and the other square type building of laterite with wooden roof with four openings and with tinshed covering towards the west. There is a Wat towards the north of the Prasad. In front of the covered structure stand two Chedis, one in white and the other in bronze colour. The covered structure is at some height and is approachable by climbing up a bit. The climbway is made of a few boulders of both sandstone and laterite. The boulders at the openings (doors) are all of sandstone. The base of the structure is circular and is made of both laterite and sandstone. It seems the covered structure formed the main shrine and the Prang towards its east formed its Gopuram. In its original shape it must have been an imposing building. The footprint of the Buddha seems to be a later installation.

*Prasad Muang Khaek*



Prasad Muang Khaek



Prasad Muang Khaek – A Diety on Kirtimukha



Prasad Muang Khaek – Mahiṣāsuramardini scene



Prasad Muang Khaek – Vishnu Standing in the ocean

Prasad Hin Non Ku

It is at a distance of about $\frac{1}{2}$ km. south of Prasad Muang Khaek. Now in ruins, it has only the outer framework of it at some height that is left of it at present plus a few stone boulders lying here and there. Near it to the southeast stand two door frames. The structure around them was of brick as is noticeable from the brick remains. The base, however, was of sandstone. There are brick remains in the boundary wall also.

The Prasad like other Prasads had a stone boundary as is noticeable by the stone lining going round it.

Some stone pieces with some carving are lying near the shrine, obviously the fallouts from it. They were in all probability decoration pieces to be put at some higher reaches of the shrine. There is a door smaller in size at the front side of the shrine. The big shrine and the structure near it face west, something very peculiar.

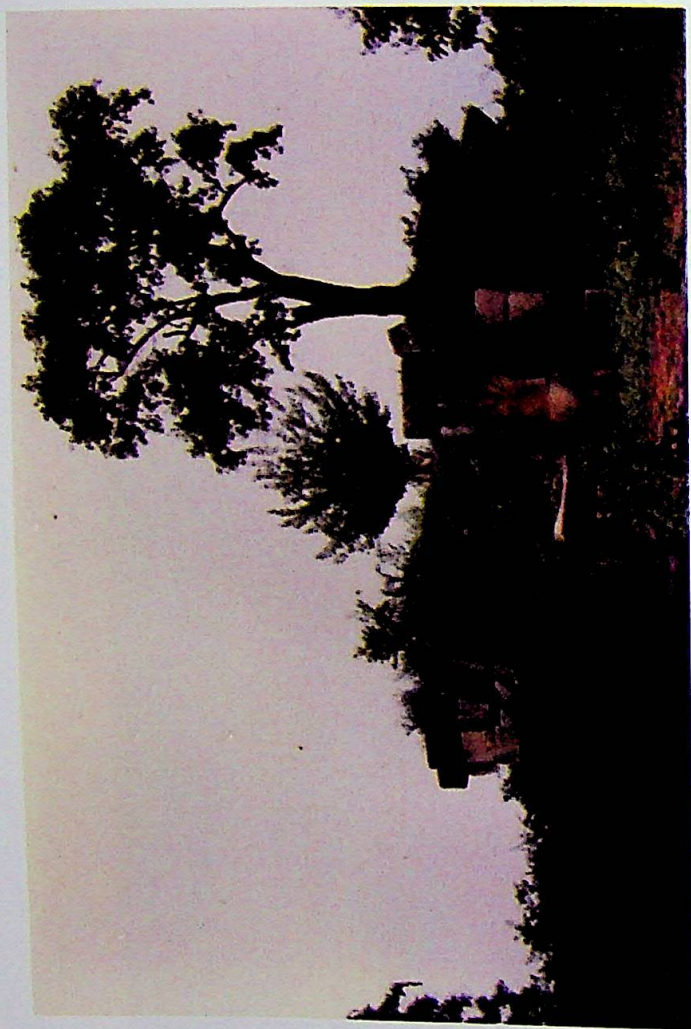
A top of the pillar lying nearby the main shrine has exquisite floral carvings on it -- lotus petals at top and a ring of beads below. Just to the northeast corner of the main building (shrine), the other side of the two door frame brick structure, there might have been another brick structure as can be inferred from the mound of bricks.

According to Dr. Chirapat Prasad Non ku might have been the temple of Śiva as it faces the west. The boundary wall of the shrine is of brick. There might have been a gate at the western side as can be inferred from the stone pieces with brick structure in between—probably the Gopuram.

*Prasad Hin Non Ku*



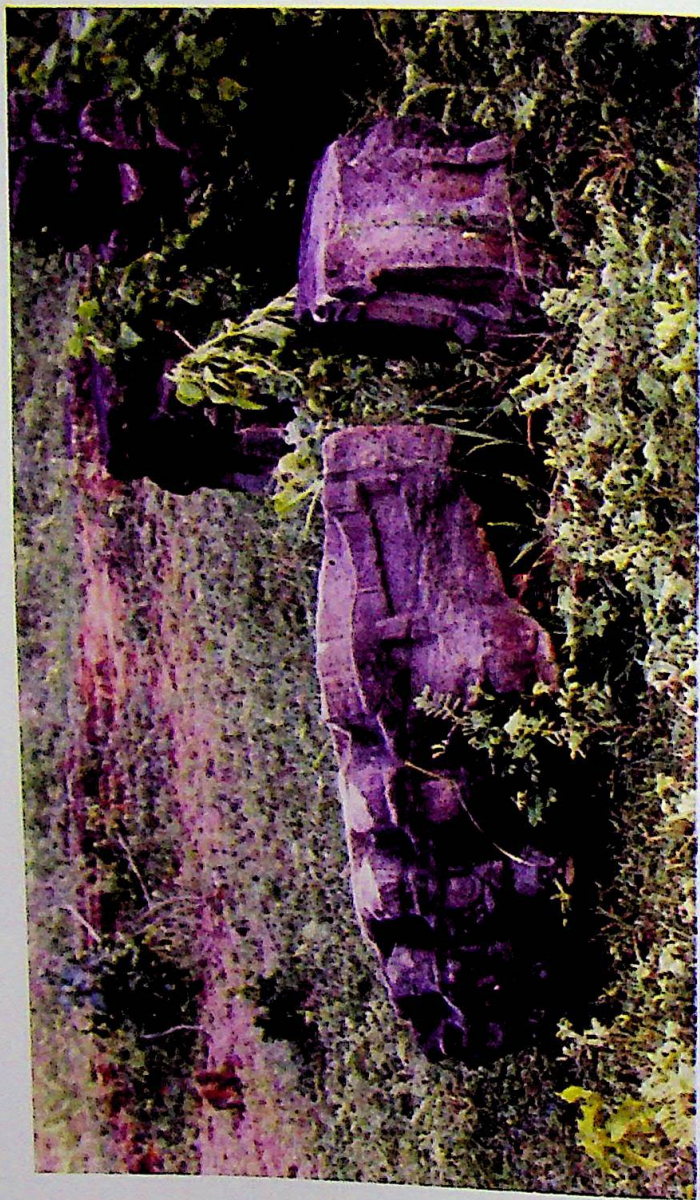
Prasad Hin Non Ku



Prasad Hin Non Ku



Prasad Hin Non Ku – A Capital



Prasad Hin Non Ku – Decorated parts lying in the open

Prasad Muang Kau

It is about 30 kms. west of Nakhon Ratchasima, 3 kms. to the right of the Friendship Highway. It has no carving on it. The Prasad is very much in ruins. Only the shape persists. Some stones fallen from it are lying around. The Prasad has only two structures, one Prang of sandstone and laterite and the other square type building of laterite with wooden roof with four openings and with tinshed covering towards the west. There is a Wat towards the north of the Prasad. In front of the covered structure stand two Chedis, one in white and the other in bronze colour. The covered structure is at some height and is approachable by climbing up a bit. The climbway is made of a few boulders of both sandstone and laterite. The boulders at the openings (doors) are all of sandstone. The base of the structure is circular and is made of both laterite and sandstone. It seems the covered structure formed the main shrine and the Prang towards its east formed its Gopuram. In its original shape it must have been an imposing building. The footprint of the Buddha seems to be a later installation.

Prasad Ban Ra Ngeng

The Prasad is situated 34 kms, east of Surin in the District of Sikhoraphum. It has in all five Prangs, all made of brick, two frontward, two backward and one in the middle which is the biggest of all. Their basement is made of laterite. Their stone Śikhara broken away from them are now lying on the ground in the open. Their plaster has all but gone off, but at some places where it exists it shows decorative carvings as on the back side of the middle Prang pillars which have the carvings of the Nāgas on both sides, right and left. Due to exposure to rain and sunshine the plaster on them, the pillars, has gone black while moss has appeared elsewhere.

To the modern entrance to the Prasad to the right side is a Buddhist Wat. The entrance gate, a beautiful well-designed construction belongs to the Wat. It is in sharp contrast to the

Prasad in ruins

The old entrance to the Prangs must have been from the east. Now, of course, it is from the west. The Prangs face the east. The place for the images inside each Prang is at some height to go to which one has to climb a couple of steps. It also is narrow. The door panels of the Prangs are made of sandstone. The Prangs thus have three different materials for their construction, laterite for basement, bricks for the body and sandstone for the door panels.

The lintel at the entrance to the middle Prang has an interesting stone carving, by far the most important remnant of the Prangs. It shows Śiva with ten hands in Natarāja posture on three birds perched on a Kirtimukha. Also shown in the carving are Brahmā identifiable with his *Kamaṇḍalu*, Gaṇeśa identifiable with his elephant-head and a host of gods and goddesses, quite a few of them on Gajasimhas, elephant-lions. The entire door panel has exquisite decorative carvings, the beams at the top and the pillars below. Each of the pillars carry the figure of a lady with a parrot in the front side. On the southern side of the same pillars are found the figures of Dvārapālas, the guardians of the doors, with a canonical cap and a sword or a club in hand set on the earth. On the side of the pillars, the northern one, where a lady with a parrot is shown are also shown figures of Dvārapālas, the guardians of the doors (in the form of demons) with beard and different headgear and with a sword or a club in the same manner as in the southern side.

Prof. Chirapat Prapandvidya of the Silpakorn University is of the opinion that the deity in the Natarāja posture on the lintel in the middle Prang is not Śiva, but Trailokyavijaya Buddha. The birds depicted in the carving represent heaven. He bases his opinion on the fact that all the important Hindu deities like Brahmā, Gaṇeśa and so on are placed lower to the figure in the Natarāja posture in the lintel. There are figures of Kīrtimukhas, one on each side of the figure in the Natarāja posture. There is a figure of a female deity to the right side of Brahmā. It could be that of Brāhmī, the wife of Brahmā. A figure of another female deity to the left could well be that of the goddess of Saṅkrānti.

The Prang in the southeastern direction has an inscription in Tham script on the side door panel.

A remarkable thing about the Prangs is that they have fake doors on three sides (except the front one which is real).

Among the many stone boulders lying on the ground in the open, the one with serpent hood is very interesting.

Prasad Muangtam

16 kms. from Prasad Panom Rung, it is situated in the plains and is approachable through a rural area with thick overgrowth. It is in quite a dilapidated condition. Still, whatever is left of it is enough to give an idea of its old grandeur. It has two circular walls, the outer and the inner. For entry into these are four doors, one in each direction. Enclosed in the outer wall is a gallery that goes all round it. Enclosed in the inner wall are small shrines of small bricks of which only two are in somewhat good shape. The remaining three have all but crumbled; their roofs have given way and the bricks fallen apart. Of those which are in somewhat good condition one has on its entry door a figure of a deity on a bull, Śiva in all probability. The entry door of the other has the figure of a deity on three swans whose identity is difficult to determine. The presence of the swan would lead to his being Brahmā but that deity has four faces while the figure of the deity sculpted on this door has only one face. According to Late Prince Subhadradis Diskul he could be Varuṇa for in Thai architecture swan has been shown to be the vehicle of Varuṇa as well. Further, the figures appearing on the doors could well represent the guardian deities of the quarters, the Dikpālas. Śiva being the Dikpāla of the Īsāna, northeast, his figure on the side of the temple in that quarter is in order. By the same logic the figure facing the west should be that of Vāyu, Wind, who is the guardian deity of that quarter. And his vehicle is deer and not swan.

The inner quadrangle has two doors. The back of both of these has figures sculpted in stone. One of these is that of Kīrtimukha. The other depicts the scene of a fight between elephants on the

upper and the figure of a Kīrtimukha with the body of a lion and the face of a human being on the lower portions. One of these depicts the scene of the suppression of the serpent Kāliya by Kṛṣṇa while the other depicts a deity mounted on Kīrtimukha.

Just opposite the shrine is the statue of the Buddha in white which by all appearances looks a recent creation. To the back of it is a Buddhist Wat, both tell a different story. One tells the story of an age that is past and the other tells that of an age that is still on and in ascendance. While there is eerie silence in one, there is visible activity in the other.



Prasat Muangtam

Prasad Ban That

It is in the Ratanaburi District, 70 kms. northeast of Surin. An old ruin once, it has recently been rebuilt as a Caitya. Its description as Prasad would suggest that it might have been a Brahmanical temple originally. It is said that even when it was in its original state, it carried no carvings or figures on it. Though rebuilt, it still has its plinth of old laterite. His Majesty the King of Thailand visited it in B.E. 2519, i.e. A.D. 1976. He installed the relics of the Buddha in it. Altogether are enshrined in it 53 pieces of those relics which were presented to Thailand by Nepal.

The Caitya-turned Prasad has a flourishing Wat nearby. The Abbot has a photograph taken on the occasion of the installation

of the relics by His Majesty the King and also a book carrying details of the above functions as also the history, in brief outlines, of the Prasad.

The base for the image with two holes in it for its in-fixure is found near the present Caitya, just a couple of metres from it, in the midst of old stones of laterite. A thatched covering over it has been provided by the Wat. This is yet another proof that the structure on the plinth was a temple in days of yore.

Prang Pha Ko

It is 4 kms. south of Chokchar, righthand side, on the road to Khonburi. It is a mound now on top of which are one entry point and three fake doors. One of the fake doors has floral carvings. A triangular piece of stone with blurred carving is lying nearby. So are a few small boulders. Towards its north is a big mound on top of which two pillars of door frame, one big and one small, are found. A few stone boulders are lying nearby them. There is a stone with some carving on it which lies some distance from it. Slabs 1, 3, 5 and 7 on the carved fake door of the Prang have the motif of blown lotus intermittent with some floral design. Slabs 2, 4, 6 and 8 have the motif of flowers. There are carvings on the pillar centre of the fake door. The design of these is interesting in that one slab is shown protruding and one receding. The stone on this fake door has lining on it.

(A) Shrine of Ratchaburi

Wat Mahathat

Surrounded by a laterite wall it has four Prangs, the middle one being the biggest, with the image of the Buddha in its central part in a small shrine 5' x 5' said to be 100 years old. It is approachable by a flight of 25 steps.

On the northern side of the Prang there are quite interesting carvings. There are seven gables on it. The seventh one at the top has no carving. Below that is a human figure in standing posture.

Next to it in order of descent is a seated figure with hands folded. Next is depicted Rāma discharging an arrow. According to Dr. Chirapat it could well be the Buddha, a reference to the account of his pervious births. Further down is shown Rāma discharging an arrow with a Ṛṣi-like figure (with matted hair) by his side, seated in what looks like a palace (on account of the balcony) with two figures below to the right hand side. The gable below that has the head of a figure. Below that comes the most interesting of the carvings on all the gables. It shows a figure with a trident in a fiery posture so noticeable with the bulging eyes. The trident holding figure at first suggests itself to be that of Śiva. On subsequent thought, however, it begins to look different. An elephant head is shown in the carving next to a small figure appearing lower than the big one. The lower figure carries a Chowrie and is shown clutching at the base of the trident and resting on the head of a horse. The carving has on its both sides five-hooded Nāga heads. So also it has three deity figures amidst a wealth of floral carving. In all probability the scene represents the Buddhist legend of the abduction of the Buddha (Prince Siddhārtha) by a demon in a previous birth.

A Nāga head each appears on both sides and the figures of deities in panels on top of the figure in the gable, immediately up it.

On the northern side gable of the small Prang to the north of the middle one is depicted the scene of Garuḍa carrying Nārāyaṇa.

On the gable of the middle Prang is depicted the scene of the cutting of hair by Prince Siddhārtha before ordination.

The other Prangs also have some figure or the other on them but none of them is particularly noteworthy.

The old Prangs are surrounded by a gallery new by all appearances with the Buddha figures under construction in it.

By the side of the middle Prang is a circular brick base of some of the structures. It can be said to have been the base of the fifth Prang which for some reason or the other might not have come up or, though highly unlikely, might have got collapsed. This

would make up for the five Prang architecture which generally is the pattern in Thailand. Outside of it in the gallery is a huge black figure of the reclining Buddha. In the compound are located some fairly big images of the Buddha under tin sheds.

The three sides of the middle Prang have each a big figure of the Buddha in standing posture. Just opposite to the one on the back side gable of the small Prang is shown Garuḍa with belly bulging out clutching at, in all probability, Nāgas. In between his two feet is shown a small figure of another Garuḍa. A similar figure appears on the gable of the Prang to the south of the middle one.

On the eastern gable of the Prang to the south of the middle one is depicted Indra on a three-headed elephant.

On the south of the middle Prang there are a number of gables—five in all. The description of the scenes on them is as follows: Top: some figure difficult to identify. Below that: A figure of a deity in standing posture. Still below that: A deity carried by a fish-like lady (probably a reference here to Janaka, in the first of the ten previous lives of the Buddha). Further below that: Some figure standing in a chariot. And last of all: The scene of the renunciation.

*Wat Mahathat – Ratchaburi*



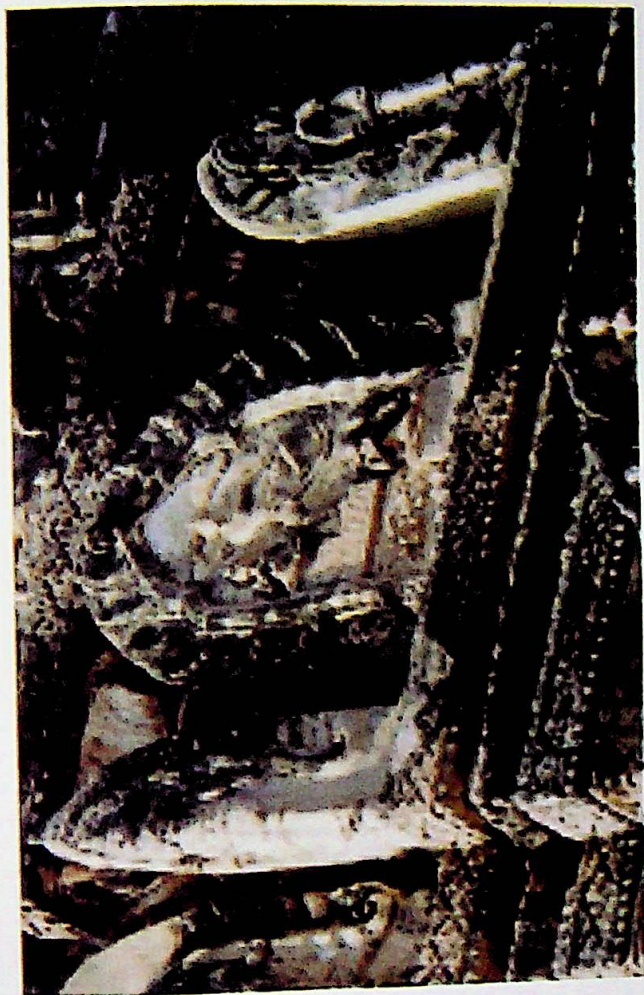
Wat Mahathat – Ratchaburi



Wat Mahathat – Ratchaburi



Wat Mahathat Ratchaburi



Wat Mahathat Ratchaburi
Rāma

(B) Shrines of Phetchburi

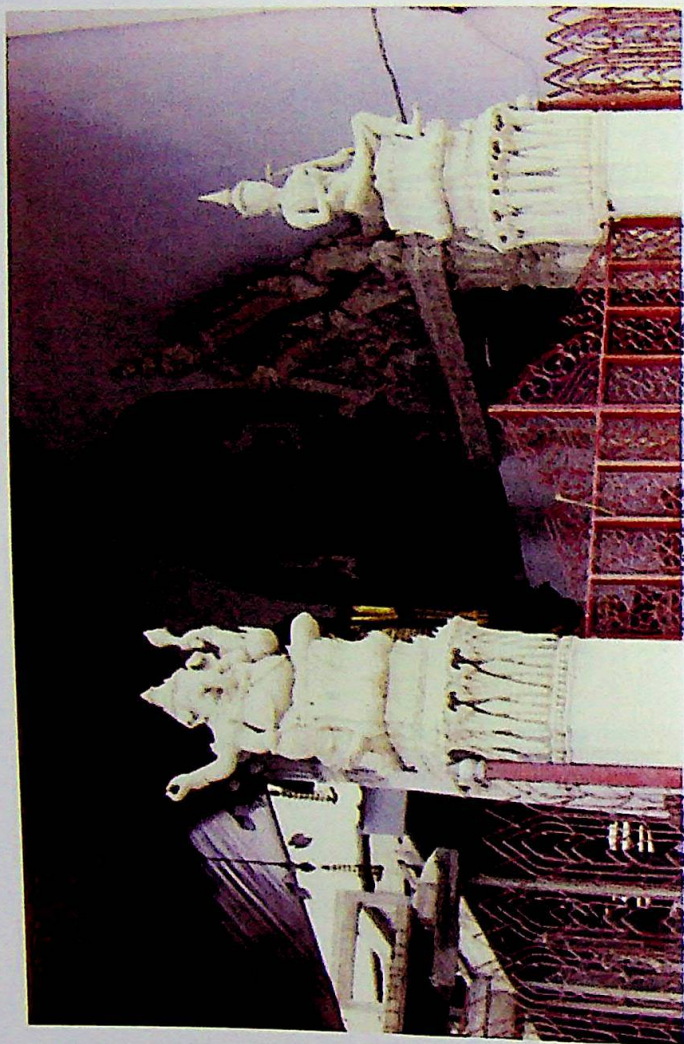
Wat Kampheng Laeng (the temple of Laterite Wall)

The Wat is at a distance of 5 kms. from the Phetchburi Railway Station. It has three Prangs in a row. The middle one is slightly bigger than the rest. In front of the Prangs in a row stands another Prang. Behind them is a wall with a lot of laterite stones scattered around suggesting the existence earlier of another Prang. So does the presence of the plinth. There could thus be said to have been five Prangs originally. One in front, three in the middle and one at the back, all made of laterite. The plaster of all of these has gone off except that of a portion of the middle one in the middle row. The back as also the northern sides of it have good floral carvings. The Prangs have high plinths. The seat for installing the image in the Prangs is at some height and is approachable by climbing a few steps. In the Prangs where the roofs are intact, the Buddha images, quite big in size, by all appearances new, are found installed. It is difficult to say what images the Prangs had originally and whether the Prangs represented Hindu or Buddhist shrines. The Prangs are in the area of a flourishing monastery with different monastic buildings come up around them. There are two figures carved on two sides of the first Prang in the middle row. The plaster of them has gone off considerably and the laterite is peeping out. The figure from the position of the hand and the standing posture suggests itself to be that of the Buddha. The plaster of the better portion of the arms as of the part of the body from the waist to almost the end of the legs on the southern side of the first Prang has the plaster almost intact. The presence of these figures on the walls of the Prangs would suggest their being Buddhist sanctuaries. But nothing definite can be said on the point at this stage. The architecture of the Prangs is similar to that of the shrines, both Hindu and Buddhist built by the Khmers in different periods in what now is Thailand. The Prang in the first row has certain stones or stone boulders suggesting some artistic work. One of these has five small conical mounds, a top decoration of

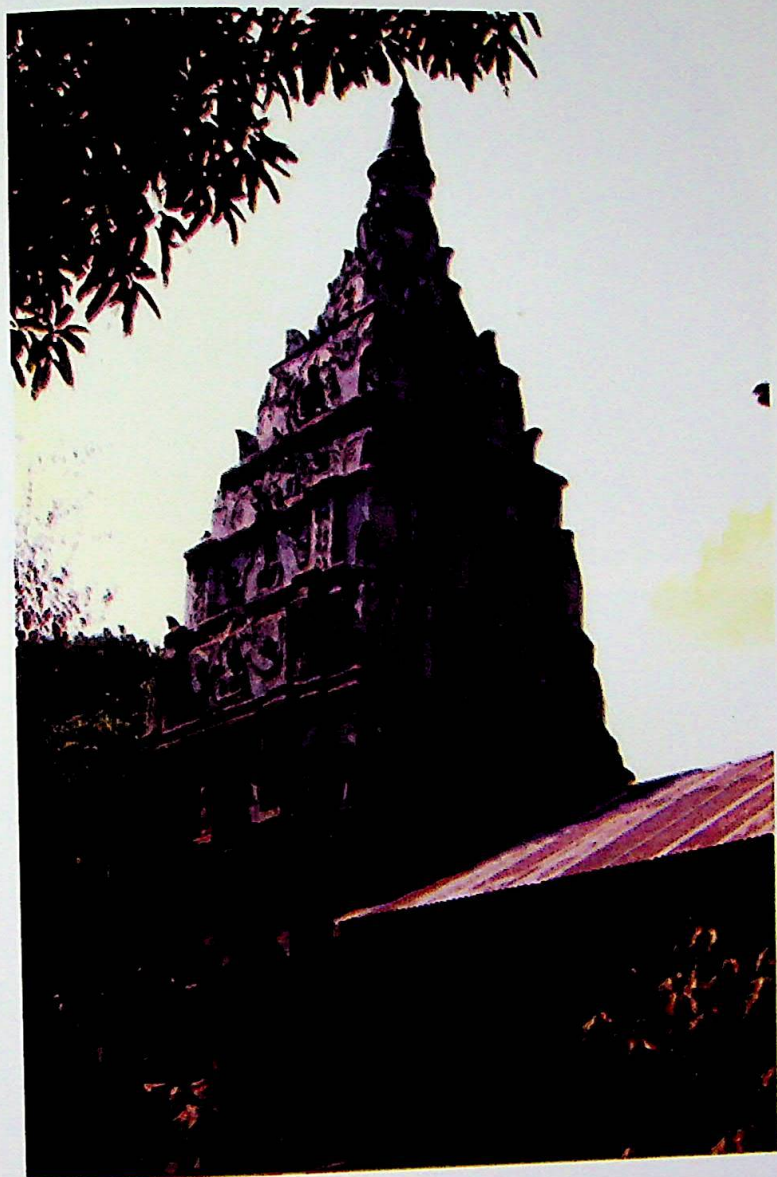
the roof called in Thai Barali, obviously a fall out from the top of the western porch. The Prang has false windows marked by five columns with ring carvings.

Wat Mahathat

It lies in the centre of the city of Phetchaburi. The central shrine has on its gable the figure of Garuḍa carrying Nārāyaṇa. The gable of the main shrine, the main Vihāra, has a four tier scheme. Topmost it is a figure (a deity?) with folded hands. Just merging with the lower part of this is Kāla. There is Kāla again in small. Below that there is again Kāla but in big size. Below that is Nārāyaṇa flanked by two birds without their lower parts. Still below is the figure of Garuḍa flanked by two birds without lower parts grasping a Naga each in both of his hands in the posture of fierce fullness, with eyes bulging out. Supporting Garuḍa is a small figure looking like Hanumān with his wide open mouth and with four hands, two hold swords while two just rest on knees. On the pillars of the side entrance to it in the northern side are two figures, one of Gaṇeśa and the other of Viśvakarman in white.



Wat Mahathat – Phetchaburi



Wat Mahathat – Phetchaburi



Kampaeng Laeng, Phetchburi



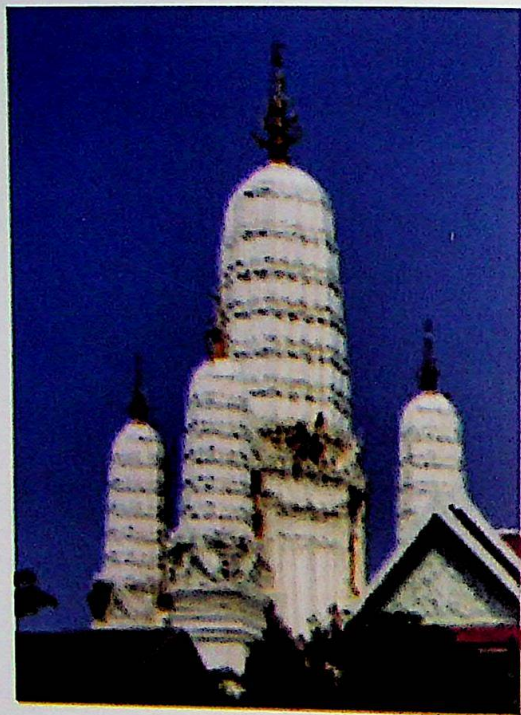
*Kampaeng Laeng
Phetchburi
Northern ruins*



Kamphang Laeng Phetchburi, Eastern ruins



Kamppeng Laeng Phetchburi, Western ruins



*Wat Mahathat
Prang, Phetchaburi*



Wat Mahathat, Phetchaburi

(C) Shrines of Lopburi

The city of Lopburi is full of a number of important ancient Hindu monuments. Some of the more noteworthy of them are:

San Phra Kān, The Kāla Shrine

It is found in the heart of Lopburi. It is called in Thai San Phra Kal (San = Śālā), (Kal = Kāla, Śiva). Though the name would make it to be a Śiva temple, it is actually the temple of Viṣṇu. The image in it is that of Phra Narai, Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu. The material used in the construction of it is laterite. It stands on a high pedestal and is also called High Shrine for that. The sanctuary of it has two images of Narai or Viṣṇu, one big and the other small, the small of the earlier period, from 7th-9th cen. A.D. and the big in Lopburi style with a sandstone Buddha-like head of the Ayudhya period. Out of the four hands of the big one three are borken, two completely and the third partially. A very popular temple, it is visited by large numbers of devotees every day. Two inscriptions in Mon now preserved in the Sivamokkha Phiman Hall of the National Museum, Bangkok, were found here. They concern the donation of slaves and certain objects like flags, chariots, oxen and clothes to a Buddhist monastery.

In the compound below around a tree a large number of monkeys strut about undisturbed. Food is offered to them to earn Bunya or Puṇya or merit.

Wat Indra

It is a deserted Wat opposite Wat Nakhon Kosa. Built in the Ayudhya period, the name of its founder is not known.

Wat Nakhon Kosa

It is near the Kāla Shrine to the north of the Lopburi Railway Station. It might originally have been a Hindu Shrine built by the Khmers. A Prang (= tower) of the 12th cen. A.D. still stands in front of it.

Prang Sam Yod

Believed to be the symbol of Lopburi, it is a shrine of three Prangs. Hence the name Sam Yod (Sam = three). It is built in the Lopburi style between the years 950 and 1250 when the Khmers were still powerful. It is situated beside the rail-road, on the slope west of the Railway line, overlooking the Kāla Shrine. The three Prangs are in laterite and sandstone and are adorned with stucco. According to Prince Subhadradis Diskul these were built probably as a Buddhist sanctuary. The Bulletin of the Lopburi Tourist Organization Centre, however, calls it a Hindu Shrine. Prince Diskul mentions the existence of the base of a Buddha image in the Central Prang. The Centre's Bulletin, however, says that 'there is a platform...where the holy symbol of Hinduism, the Liṅga, had been placed there.' Since no images are found in the Prangs now, only the bases are left, it is all a guess work as to what images would have been there. Circumstantial evidence, however, leads us to agree with the Centre's view that they are Hindu monuments. The architecture is a piece with the Hindu Khmer temples elsewhere, such as the ones at Pimai, Panom Rung and Muangtam. The carvings on the outer sides of the Prangs carry figures of the Hindu deities. The carving of the front side in the southern direction depicts in all probability Kārttikeya seated on a peacock with knees raised and the hands joined, holding something which is leaning towards the right hand. Straight up this figure is a figure which is highly indistinct. It could be the figure of Yama on buffalo. By the side of the Kārttikeya figure are two other clear figures, one to the east and the other to the southeast, in standing posture most probably of ladies. Towards the east on this Prang is the figure of Indra on an elephant with three heads. Indra is shown holding something in hand which goes right up to the shoulder.

On the Middle Prang facing the east are two figures: upper, Indra on an elephant with three heads, lower, only the elephant with three heads; probably the figure of Indra on it got broken. On this very Prang facing the north is a very interesting figure. From a distance it looks like that of Hanumān flying in the sky but

looked at from close quarters it turns out to be entirely different. It is the figure of a man, head broken, riding a man. The man carrying the human load is in a flying posture with front knee bent and the back leg hanging with the knee bending down. One leg of the man on top is coiled under the arm of the one carrying him, while the other is on his arm. In one of the hands the riding man carries something looking like a club. The hands of the man lifted are shown falling on the legs. Evidently the figure is that of Kubera who is described in mythology as Naravāhana, *nara*, a man, as his vehicle. The club also goes very well with him.

On this very Prang facing the south is a figure, with broken head, on a buffalo with three heads in the Lalitāsana posture, with one knee slightly raised and the other flat, left arm at the waist, the right holding something which could be a club. On all counts it seems to depict Yama.

Western side of the Middle Prang has a figure on a vehicle with three heads in the Lalitāsana posture holding something like a club in hand. Towards the right side of it is a figure which appears to be that of Haṁsa, swan. In all probability the figure represents Varuṇa. What he holds in hand goes right up to the shoulder.

On the eastern side, First Prang, much below Indra there is a figure in meditation with head broken. It could be the Buddha in bas relief.

The figures on the Prangs according to the direction in which they were put would give the impression of their being those of the presiding deities of the quarters. Facing the east is Indra, the west is Varuṇa, the south is Yama and the north is Kubera. These precisely are the deities presiding over the said quarters. One peculiarity which cannot go unnoticed here is in the figure of Kārttikeya on peacock on the First Prang facing the south. In Indian mythology the deity under reference is not associated with any particular quarter. Since the figures of all the four deities, Indra, Varuṇa, Yama and Kubera as the presiding deities of the east, the west, the south and the north are already there, there is no need actually for the figure of Kārttikeya as the presiding deity

of the south. It could well be that he was put there as the guardian deity of the whole shrine.

The architectural style of the Prangs would point to their having been constructed in the reign of King Jayavarmman VII. Since Jayavarmman VII was a Buddhist, it was presumed that the shrine must be a Buddhist one. Since Avalokiteśvara is in the middle of the Buddha forms, the Middle Prang was supposed to have his image.

The door columns of the Prangs are in stone. On the first Prang at the base are carved figures of seated hermits, Ṛṣis, exactly in the same style as found at Panom Rung, with knees raised and the hands tucked at the cheeks. The outer part of the Prangs must have been decorated with beautiful designs some of which are still visible.

Towards the main sanctuary lies a Vihāra built in the reign of King Narai (1656-1688) which has a large Buddha image in Ayudhya style in posture of meditation.

The Sam Yod, the three Prangs were restored by the Royal Institute in 1926 and were fenced later by the Fine Arts Department.

Prang Khaek, Hindu Shrine

Called in Thai Prang Khaek, it lies towards the northeast of the Royal Palace. It is in the form of three Prangs, like the Sam Yod, the middle one bigger than the other two, made of brick with plaster worn off. They are specimens of beautiful Khmer architecture belonging probably to the 10th-11th cen. A.D. They were probably restored during the period of King Narai. There is a base for the deity image in the Middle Prang. In front of this monument are found the remains of another later Hindu shrine. To the south of it is a brick tank for water supply to the south of which still lies a terra cotta pipe. The later Hindu shrine and the water tank were probably later additions of the time of King Narai.

Wat Phra Sri Ratana Mahathat

It is a large deserted Wat behind the Railway Station towards the southwest. Built probably in the 12th cen. A.D. when the Khmers were still powerful, the Wat had probably three Prangs surrounded by galleries. At the moment only one of these, the Central one, with remains of beautiful designs on its exterior, is found. A Vihāra and a Pavillion in front of it were added during the reign of King Narai. Restored several times in the reigns of Kings Ramesuan, Maha Chakraphat, Narai and Borom Kot the Wat has in its sprawling compound a number of Chedis and Prangs decorated with exquisite stucco designs.

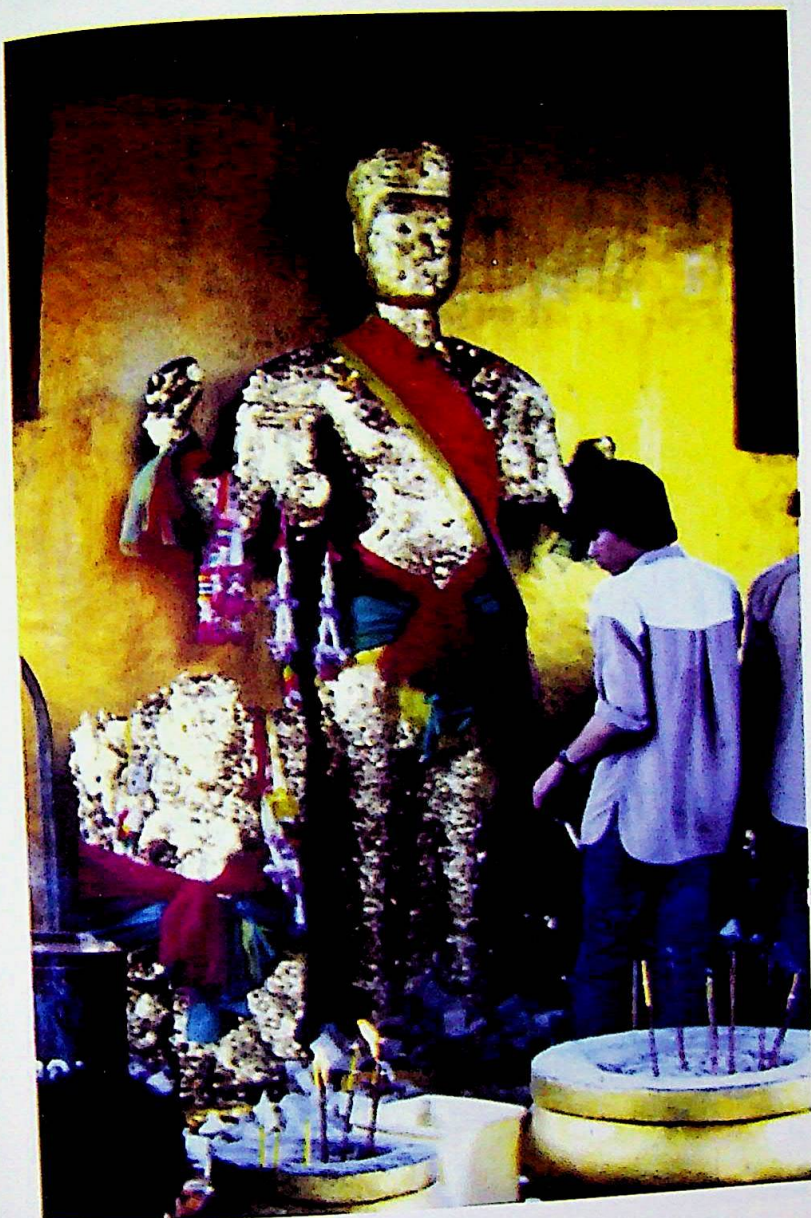
Lak Muang or an auspicious pole

It is near the Phra Rama Road, west of the Royal Reception House. It seems to have been as old as the city of Lopburi itself. A legend connects it with the Rāma story. It is said that after Rāvaṇa's death Rāma wanted to reward Hanumān by building a town for him. He shot an arrow into the sky. The idea was that wherever the arrow would fall he would build the city. The arrow fell at Lopburi which was a hill at that time and changed it into a plain. The monkey general Hanumān followed the magic arrow. When he saw the arrow falling and the hill crashing into a plain, he came down and wiped the earth with his tail. Indra sent his engineer Viśvakarmā to lay the city. When laid, it was named by Rāma Lavapuri after his second son Lava. It is this Lavapuri which due to phonetic change became Lopburi.

The earth touched by Rāma's arrow is said to have been turned into chalk which incidentally constitutes the principal export of Lopburi. The arrow, Lak Muang, was green in colour. People considering it auspicious broke it into pieces and carried it away, practically every bit of it. Subsequently a shrine was built over it. Whatever of it might have been left lies buried underneath it.



Lophuri – Front View of San Phra Kān
Sān= śāla, Phra= Vara, Kān= kāla



San Pura Kān Lophuri – Image of Nārāyaṇa



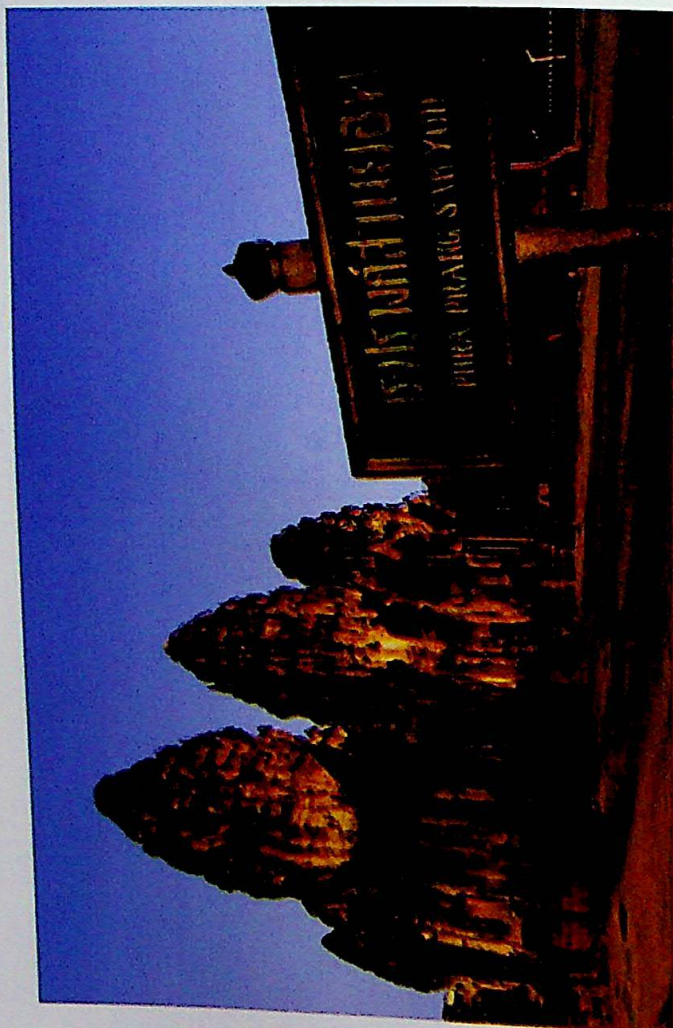
*San Pran Kān, Lophuri – Kāla shrine.
Dancing in progress in front of deity*

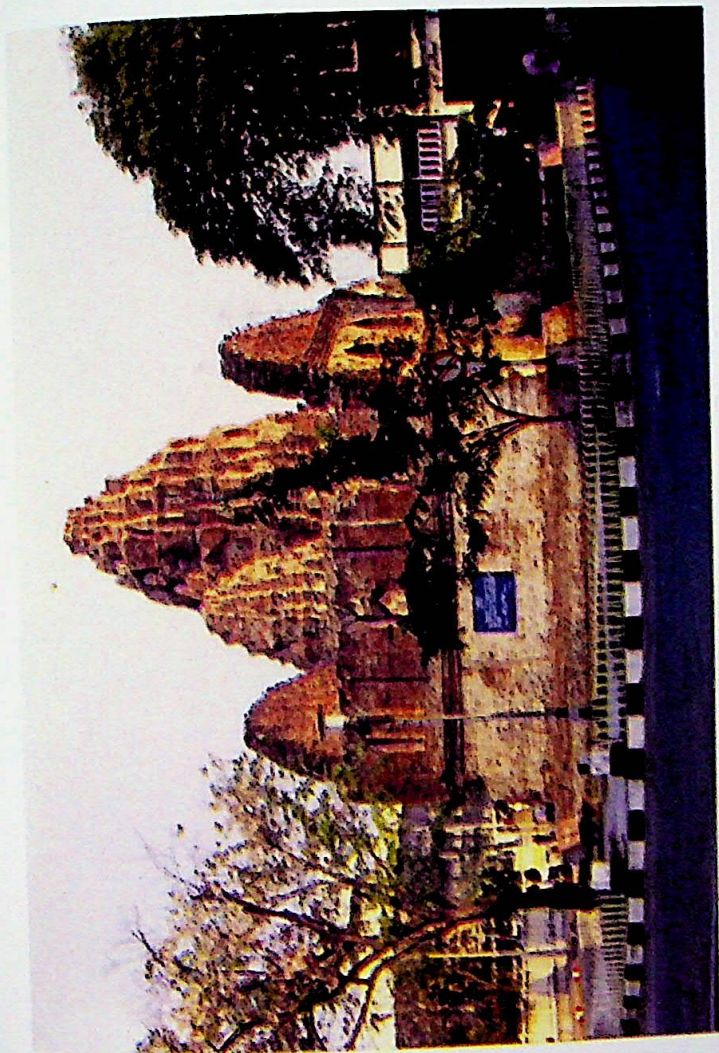


Wat Indra, Lopburi



Lophuri – Wat Nakhon Kosa

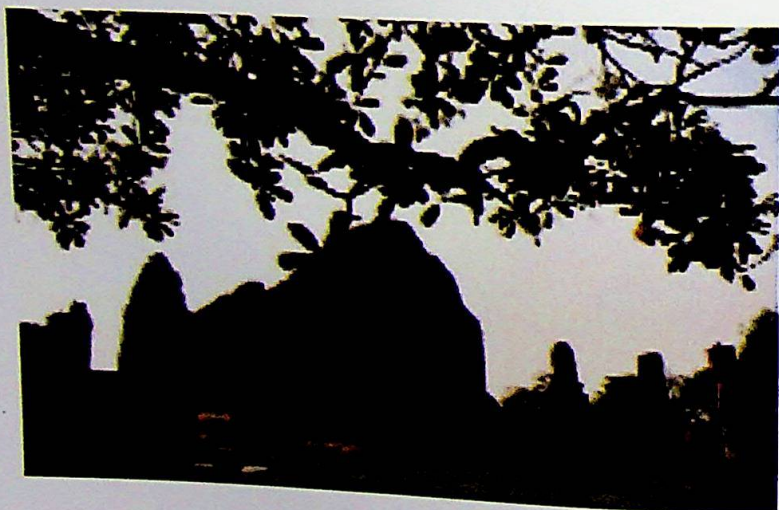
*Prang Sam Yod - Lopburi*



Wat Phra Khaek (Hindu Shrine) – General View, Lopburi



Wat Phra Sriratana Mahathat, Lopburi



Wat Phra Sriratana Mahathat, Lopburi



Lak Muang, the Auspicious Pole in Lopburi where the arrow of Rāma fell. It was around it that Hanumān had got built a city to rule over it. That was the reward that he had extracted from Rāma for helping him in the battle with Ravana

*Another view of Lake Muang*

(D) Shrines of Sukhothai

About 65 kms. from Sukhothai is the historical park of *Shrines of Sukhothai*. Though more well-known for its Buddhist sites like the Wat Mahathat, Sukhothai has some Brahmanic sites too besides Brahmanic artefacts discovered from areas around it which are now housed in the Museum there and the National Museum, Bangkok. As many as fourteen images of Hindu gods like Śiva, Viṣṇu, Hari-Hara and goddess Umā have been found from there, which except two are now housed in the National Museum, Bangkok. The two of Viṣṇu and Hari-Hara, are in the Ramkham-haeng Museum, Sukhothai ... These images are in bronze and wearing typical attires are exquisitely adorned. The Brahmanic sites of Sukhothai are:

Thewalai Kaset Phiman/Ho Thewalai

It is mentioned in the Stone Inscription of King Li Thai of 1361 A.D. This records the placing of the images of Śiva and Viṣṇu in the shrine in 1339 A.D. for Brāhmaṇas to worship.

The Inscription reads:

*In 1271 Śaka, a year of the Ox, on Friday,
the 11th of the waxing moon of Āśāḍha in the
ṛkṣa of Pūrvāṣāḍha at sunrise the king (Phra
Pada Kamrateng AN Śrī Sūryavamśa Rāma
Mahārājādhirāja) erected an image of Maheśvara
and an image of Viṣṇu in the Devālaya Mahāksetra
of this Mango Grove for all the ascetics and
the Brāhmaṇas to worship for ever.....*

Khmer language, Face 1, Lines 51-53.

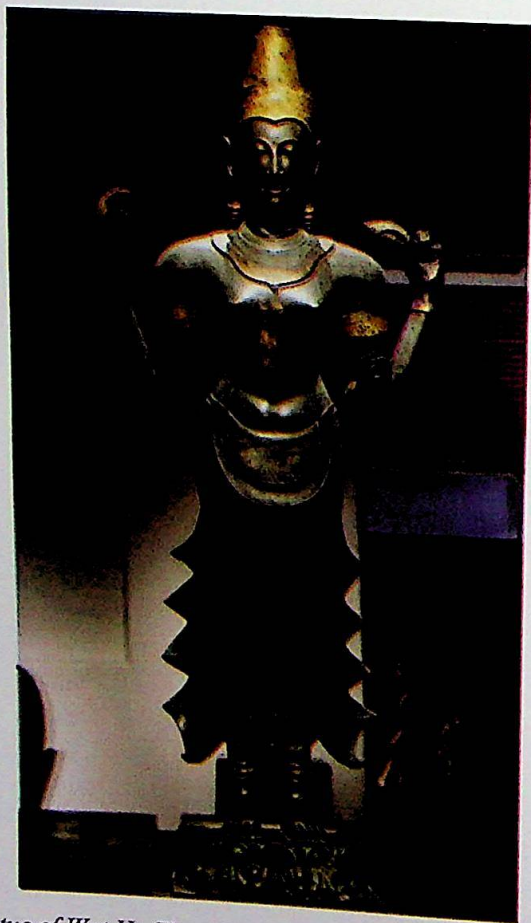
An important thing in this Thewalai, Devālaya is the base of a hall where these images originally stood. The hall is in the Maṇḍapa shape with eight columns and is 12 metres wide. This ancient monument was excavated and restored in 1970.

A peculiarity of the monument, the Śiva shrine, is that it lies straight in the direction of the Śiva cave which is on the top of a far away mountain noticeable from there.

The shrine had a beautiful Viṣṇu image also which is now with the National Museum, Bangkok.

Wat Si Sawai

It is situated 300 metres southwest of Wat Mahathat and is surrounded with beautiful scenery. Interesting work of art in it is the main Prang that consists of three towers of Lopburi style. In its front there are two bases of Vihāras located next to each other and surrounded with bricks/slate boundary wall. The outer wall



Viṣṇu Statue of Wat Ho Thewalai. Now in National Museum Bangkok

is of laterite. From its excavation and renovation fragments and antiques were found such as a lintel showing Viṣṇu stepping over the ocean, fragments of a bronze idol, a Linga and a Buddhist image of Lopburi style. King Rama VI of the Chakri dynasty visited this temple when Crown Prince. He had found the image of Svayambhū (Śiva) in the Vihāra. Hence it is assumed that Wat Si Siwai was once the ancient site of Brāhmaṇa religion.

Some Hindu sculptures were discovered from Wat Si Sawai. They are preserved now in the Ramkhamhaeng Museum of Sukhothai. These are

- (i) an image of Harihara in bronze of Sukhothai art, 14th-15th cen. A.D.
- (ii) an image of Śiva in bronze, Sukhothai art, 14th-15th cen. A.D.
- (iii) torso of Śiva in stone
- (iv) torso of Śiva in stone
- (v) right arm of a deity

Taphadaeng Shrine

It is situated north of Wat Mahathat. It is sometimes called Phra Sua Muang Shrine. The architectural style of this copied the Khmer art which exercised influence over Sukhothai during the reign of King Sūryavarman II of the 12th cen. A.D. An excavation revealed significant sculptures such as a figure of Śiva and a goddess. According to their accessories and dress it looks to be typically a Khmer sculpture of the Angkor Wat art of around the 11th cen. A.D.

Wat Phra Phai Luang

Located to the east of the northern gate and the outer rampart of Sukhothai, it is considered a group of ancient edifices of great significance because its buildings constructed in different phases have left impressive evidence of the evolution of the Sukhothai art.

The oldest ancient monuments in this temple are three buildings constructed in Prasad form (imitating Hindu Śikhara

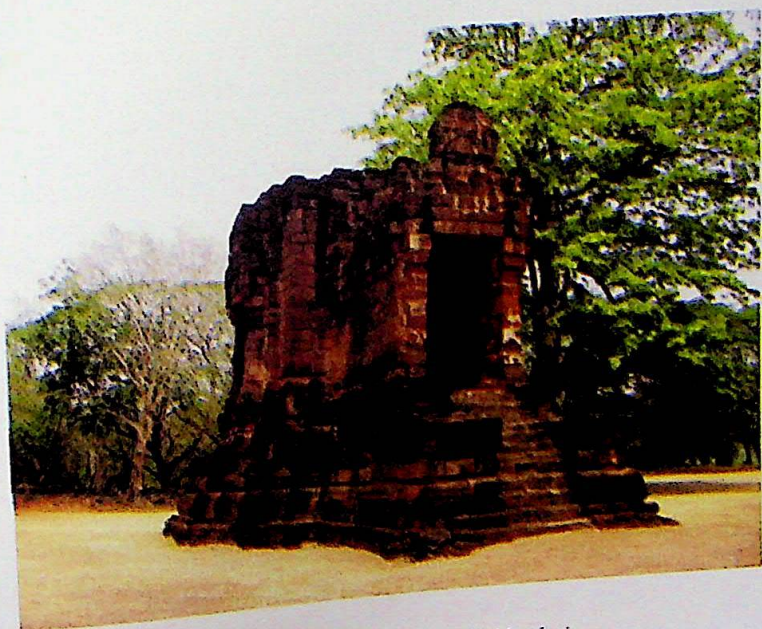
Vimānas). At present two of them are still in existence with their bases only in sight. The remaining one in the north is adorned with stuccoed relief depicting the stories of the Buddha like those at a Prasad at Wat Mahathat at Lopburi Province and at Pallial Prasad at Angkor. In addition there are stuccoed reliefs depicting deities of Hinduism, such as an image of Śiva and an image of Brahmā. These help confirm the supposition that around the 13th cen. A.D. communities in Sukhothai had cultural contact with Khmers in the reign of Jayavarman VII and were also associated with a town under the Khmer influence called Lavo (the present Lopburi Province). To the east of the Prasad are located a Vihāra and a Chedi in pyramid shape with every sloping side decorated with superimposed receding porches which are similar to those of Kutkut Chedi in Lamphun Province for enshrining the stuccoed image of the Buddha.



Ho Thewalai (Devalaya) Maha Kaset (Kṣetra), Sukhothai



Wat Si Sawai, Sukhothai



San Pura Tapha daeng, Sukhothai



Śiva, Kampheng Phet

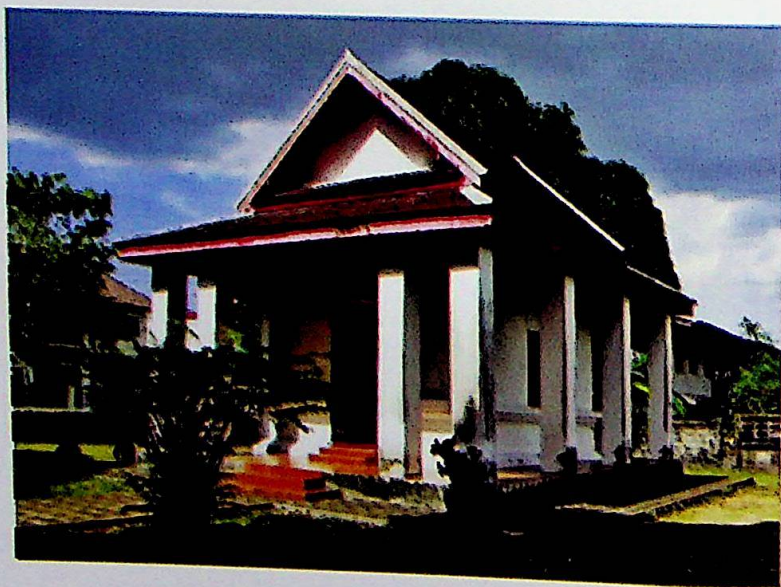
(F) Brāhmaṇa Temples

There are two temples in Thailand which go by the name of Brahmaṇa Temples. Bosth Brahmaṇa, Uposatha Brahmana, one in the southern city of Nakhon Si Thammarat and the other in the capital city of Bangkok. The one at Nakhon Si Thammarat which should have been older, the Brahmaṇas having arrived and settled there first, is by all appearances modern, having been put up recently and is just a small room with some tiny idols put up in it. It also has a swing in front of it like its counterpart in Bangkok but it is much smaller than that. It looks the old shrine would have crumbled and vanished and in its place a new structure was put up recently. There is no priest, no activity there. The idols discovered from the site (the old shrine) are now to be found in the city museum or the Bangkok National Museum. The one at Bangkok is over two hundred years old having come up with the founding of the City. On entering it the very first thing that one comes across is the image of Brahmā in a small Prang. Behind that in three shrines are found the images of Śiva, Gaṇeśa and Viṣṇu respectively. Besides these, the temple had many other images which are now preserved in the National Museum, Bangkok. Particularly noteworthy among these are the images of Harihara. From the point of art style they can be assigned to the Sukhothai Period. Some of the images are really big. Dark in colour, they carry on them golden ornamentation.

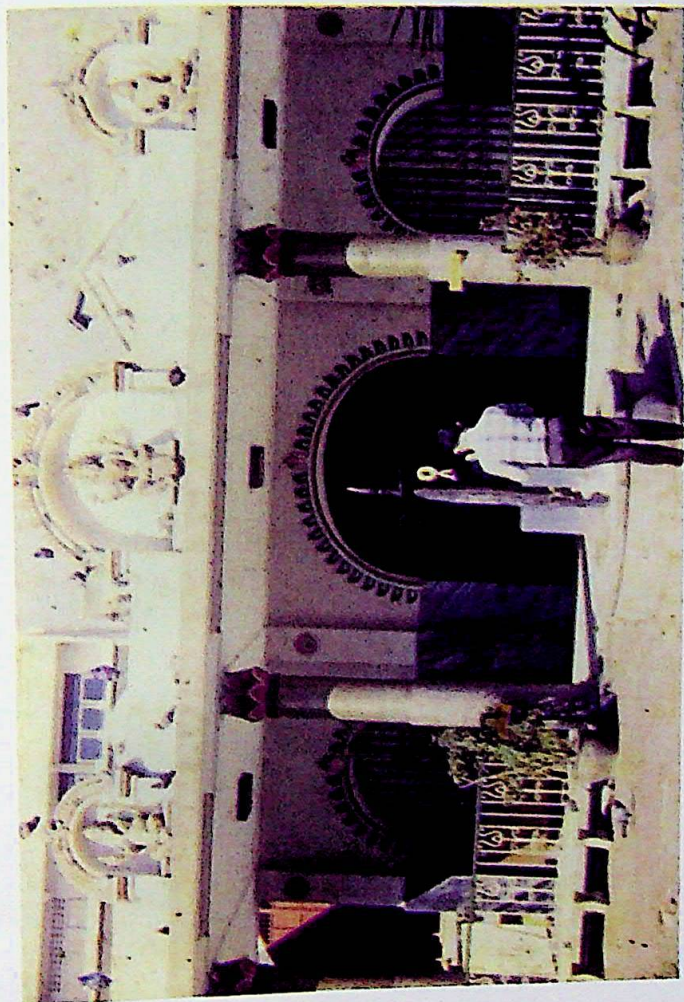
Just at a little distance from the temple is a sky high swing called in Thai Sāo Ching Chā. It is said that till the beginning of the last century there used to take place a big festival there once a year. The idols of Śiva and Pārvaṭi were brought to it in a procession from the royal palace to which worship was first offered by the Rājaguru who would swing it for a while. The King would then take over from him and would ceremonially pull the swing. After the ceremony the idols would be taken back to the palace in procession with the same fanfare with which they were brought.



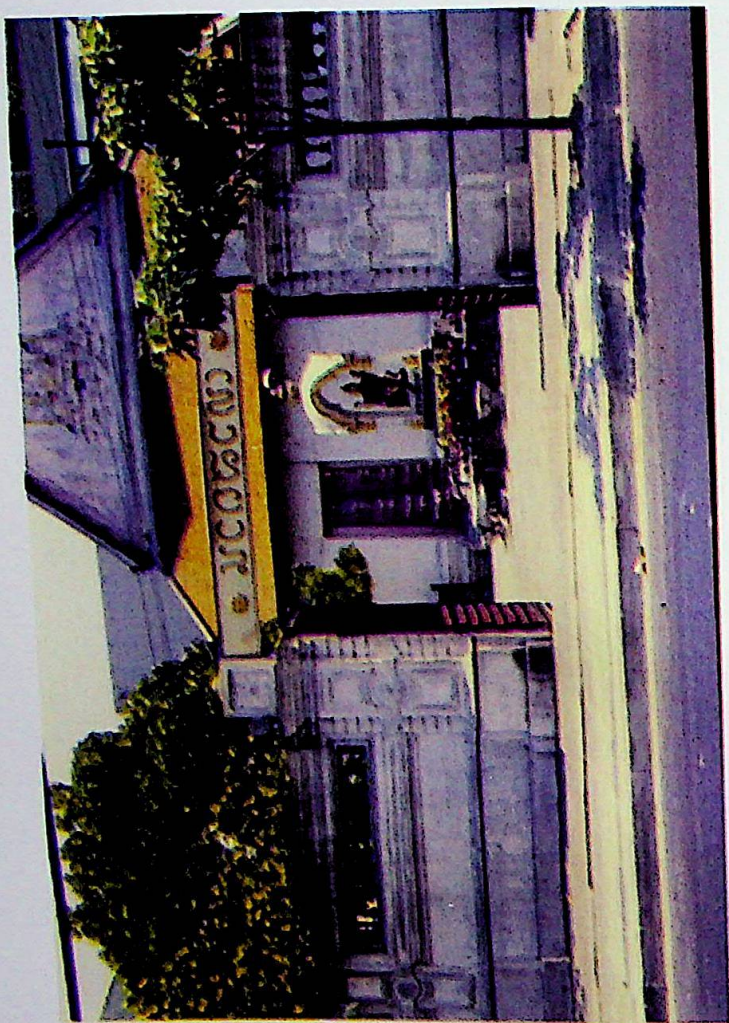
Brāhmaṇa Temple – Bosth Ho Phra Isuan (Īsuara), Nakhon Si Thammarat



*Bosth Ho Phra Isuan (Īsuara), Brāhmaṇa Temple
Nakhon Si Thammarat – Another View*



Entry Point, Brahmin Temple, Bangkok



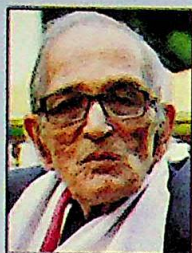
*Gable, Brahmin Temple, Bangkok
Śiva and Pārvatī on Kailāsa*



*Sao Ching Cha the Great Swing
near Bosth Phram, Brāhmaṇa Temple, Bangkok*



Viṣṇu Statue in Bosth Phram, Brāhmaṇa Temple, Bangkok



Prof. Satya Vrat Shastri

Born on 29th September 1930, Prof. Satya Vrat Shastri had his early education under his father, Prof. Charu Deva Shastri. He was consistently top rank holder up to Post-Graduation and won University Medals. After doing his Ph.D. at the Banaras Hindu University he joined the University of Delhi where during the forty years of his teaching career he held important positions of the Head of the Department of Sanskrit and Dean of the Faculty of Arts. He was also the Vice-Chancellor of Shri Jagannath Sanskrit University, Puri, Orissa. He is the first recipient of the Jnanpith Award in Sanskrit, 2009. He got the Padma Bhushan Award in 2010.

He has the distinction of having been Visiting Professor in five Universities on three Continents. Among his many foreign students the most prominent is Her Royal Highness Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, the Princess of Thailand. He has attended and chaired a number of national and international conferences and seminars and delivered more than a hundred lectures in Universities and institutions of higher learning in Europe, North America, Southeast Asia and the Far East.

Both a creative writer and a literary critic, Prof. Satya Vrat Shastri has to his credit three Sanskrit Mahākāvya of about a thousand stanzas each, a Prabandhakāvya, a Patrakāvya (in two volumes), three Khaṇḍakāvya, the first ever diary in Sanskrit *Dine Dine Yāti Madiyujivitam* and the first ever autobiography in Sanskrit (in two volumes) *Bhavitavyānān Dvārāṇi Bhavanti Sarvatra*. The well-acclaimed critical work *The Rāmāyaṇa-A Linguistic Study* which is the first ever linguistic appraisal of not only the Vālmiki-Rāmāyaṇa but of any extant Sanskrit work, *Kālidāsa Studies* in two volumes, two studies on Thailand *Sanskrit and Indian Culture in Thailand* and *Thaidesa ke Brāhmaṇa*, *Discovery of Sanskrit Treasures* (in seven volumes), *Sanskrit Studies—New Perspectives* and *Sanskrit Writings of European Scholars*, more than a century and a half of research articles and Forewords to a hundred and forty books are his contributions as a critic. He has enormous experience in translation work. He has translated A.A. Macdonell's *A Vedic Grammar for Students* in Hindi, Śrīmacarītābhidhiraṇam of Nityananda Shastri in English, the thousand Subhāṣitas, wise sayings, the *Subhāṣitasāhasrī* in Hindi and English, the *Cāṇakyanāṭi* in Hindi and English and the select poems in different languages of poet laureates of Europe in Sanskrit. He is the subject matter of twenty theses for the degrees of M. Phil. Ph.D. and D.Litt. in Indian Universities.

He is the recipient of one hundred and six Honours and Awards, national and international, including Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, President of India Certificate of Honour, Thai Royal Decoration, "The Most Admirable Order of Direk Gunabhorn", the Honour "Autorita Accademica Italiano Straniere", the Civil and Academic Authority for Foreigners from the Govt. of Italy, the Medallion of Honour from the Catholic University, Leuven, Belgium, the Golden Prize from GESMEO, the International Institute of Advanced Asian Studies, Torino, Italy and five Honorary Doctorates from Indian and foreign Universities. In the Citation for the Honorary Doctorate at the Silpakorn University, Bangkok, he was described as "a living legend in the field of Sanskrit."



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